



THE INDEPENDENT

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Raw earthy, tender: exclusive review of lost Stones tapes



Satisfaction at last: Archive tracks by the Rolling Stones, unheard outside the BBC for more than 30 years, may be released later this year David Lister on music from a locked room, page 3

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Algeria terror touches the world

The latest horrors perpetrated against the civilians of Algeria - at least 600 men, women and children slaughtered in less than a week - have finally provoked calls for an international inquiry from the US as well as Europe. But as our Middle East Correspondent Robert Fisk reports, the massacres will go on, as Algeria's military-backed government ignores the outside world.

Given the lethargy - the near-criminal silence - of the West, Washington's demand for an international enquiry into the New Year massacres must have shocked even Algeria's normally unperturbable generals. Only a few weeks ago, the departing US ambassador to Algiers claimed that "resident Liamine Zeroual was in the right track" in his ruthless war against the government's armed opponents. But he carefully crafted appeal to an enquiry shows that even the US State Department no longer believes that the Algerian bloodbath can be attributed only to 'Islamists'.

As Washington called for an investigation into Algeria's human rights abuses as well as the massacres - a sure sign of its concern at the torture now routinely practiced by the country's state security police - there came news of yet another mass killing in western Algeria and on a bus outside the capital. Most of the weekend dead - including, as always, women and children - were burned alive in three villages; in last week's slaughter in four villages near the town of Relizane, local newspapers report that 412 civilians were decapitated or disembowelled. As usual in Algeria, the killers had chosen the Muslim holy month of Ramadan to launch a new wave of barbarity.

Ironically, there seems little doubt that the Relizane murders were indeed the work of the extreme Islamic Armed Group (GIA). The villagers at Ouled Sahmane, Kherarba, El Abadel and Ouled Tayeb were themselves Islamists and had voted in the 1991 elections for the Islamic Salvation Front



Killing fields: In the latest atrocity in Algeria, a survivor found more than 50 corpses in a single house

(FIS) whose armed wing - the Islamic Salvation Army (ISA) - declared a ceasefire last October. In a series of tracts distributed in the area, the GIA warned that it was moving into western Algeria, and even the local military commander, General Kamel Abdelrahmane, warned the inhabitants to join pro-government militias in order to defend themselves.

"People must either arm or take refuge in the towns," he said. "The state does not have the means to put a soldier outside every front door." That, it seems, was the extent of the army's 'protection'. On the face of it, the Relizane massacres, which the government says left "only" 78 dead, appear to be the GIA's revenge for the villagers' loyalty to the rival ISA.

In any event, the killers - who have hitherto used knives, wire and portable guillotines to butcher civilians - added yet another grotesque feature to their latest atrocity: whole families were herded into 'killing rooms' to have their throats cut, with shovels as well as knives. One survivor awoke amid the blood of his relatives to find more than 50 corpses in a single house.

"We would like to see the government do more to protect its civilians while respecting the rule of law," the US State Department spokesman James Rubin said. "We would like to see an international enquiry get to the bottom of it." Mr Rubin added that the United States "condemned the massacres and bombing in Algeria" and wanted non-governmental organisations to conduct an investigation. The Algerian authorities, he added, had already agreed to allow a UN envoy to conduct a "fact-finding mission."

But what can the envoy do? He will need government protection to enter the killing fields of Algeria - and no-one will speak freely to him in the presence of policemen. Furthermore, the Algerian government's total refusal to countenance any form of outside involvement suggests that the latest European gestures of concern will prove useless.

A demand from France - which killed a million Algerians during the 1954-62 war - that the government must protect its own people, is likely to fall on deaf ears. An EU statement expressed only "deep concern" at the situation.

In Dublin, the Irish foreign minister David Andrews, who after a 24-hour visit to Algiers last month urged foreigners to stop condemning Algeria and described President (and ex-general) Zeroual as "a fine man, dedicated, a strong decent man," yesterday (Tue) substantially changed his line.

The Algerian government, he now said, was guilty of "committing atrocities and human rights transgressions." The Algerian government was not democratic but the massacres had to be brought to an end. It was a pious hope - and one that will, almost certainly, go unfulfilled.

TODAY'S NEWS

Loyalist prisoners take hard line over peace

Tensions remained high in Northern Ireland yesterday as a set of loyalist prisoners stuck to their position of refusing to endorse the peace process. Ulster Defence Association prisoners inside the Maze prison were apparently unmoved by arguments put forward by their political representatives, the Ulster Democratic Party, during a visit to the jail. Page 4

Jaguar to be built in UK

Britain's motor industry received a boost yesterday when Jaguar announced that its new small sports saloon would be built at Ford's Halewood plant on Merseyside. The car, codenamed X400, will go into production in the year 2001 and will compete with BMW's 3-series and the Mercedes C-class. Page 20

Hague fights back

The Conservative leader, William Hague, made it plain yesterday that he would rather disgruntled pro-Europeans quit his party than alter his policy on the single currency. Mr Hague was commenting after yesterday's letter to The Independent in which senior Tories criticised his policy on Europe. Page 6

Labour invites private firms to take over schools

Private companies will be invited by the Government to run failing schools. Judith Judd, Education Editor, hears a Labour education guru spell out radical proposals.

Professor Michael Barber said yesterday that dozens of companies had expressed an interest in playing a leading role in running new education action zones. The zones will be test beds for five year experiments in areas where schools are performing poorly.

In most places local authorities will take the leading role in running action zones, in partnership with community and voluntary groups, but the Government wants private enterprise to run some. The letter inviting bids makes it clear that ministers expect a company to run one of the first five which will begin in September. The rest will start next year.

Professor Barber, a senior government education adviser, told the North of England Education Conference in Bradford that the interested companies included household names, multi-national corporations, banking, insurance and manufacturing companies as well as private firms already involved in education such as Nord Anglia, Capita, and the Centre for British Teachers. He denied that schools would be made to make a profit, but he did not expect them to do so.

Twenty-five action zones of around 20 schools each will get £50,000 a year each plus the same amount from private sources.

Graham Lane, chairman of the Education Committee of the Local Government Association said: "These proposals are nonsensical. Business is not accountable to anyone and government wants it to be responsible for running public services where it has no expertise and no understanding of what is involved."

Stephen Dorrell, the Conservative's Education Spokesman, told the conference that he welcomed the new zones, which took the last Government's proposals for intervening in failing schools a stage further.

But local authority leaders predicted

that the proposals could lead to the privatisation of education and the end of local democracy. They have asked for an urgent meeting with the Prime Minister.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers Union, said: "The Government should be very careful before giving private companies a free rein to run the proposed education action zones. The American experience has been very mixed where some companies out to make a quick buck have failed to deliver on the promises made."

Professor Barber said that Procter & Gamble had successfully reformed school management in the United States by cutting out more than half of the bureaucracy.

Education action zones will be able to opt out of the national curriculum and rewrite teachers contracts. School governors will be expected to give up most of their powers to them.

Professor Barber said: "Those who lead education action zones will be helping to invent the future."

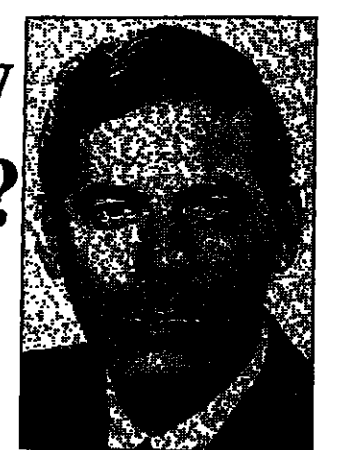
Why Does Your Memory Fail You?

A WORLD-FAMOUS memory expert, who has trained industrialists, trades unionists, businessmen, professional men, salesmen, housewives and students to improve their memories, once said:

"Many people are embarrassed by a poor memory, and find difficulty in concentrating whilst others realise that they lose business, academic and social opportunities not only because they cannot remember accurately everything they see, hear or read, but also because they cannot think or express their thoughts clearly, logically and concisely. Some seek advice, but many do not, mainly because they believe their memories cannot be improved."

Simple Technique
And yet, he went on to explain, he has devised a simple technique which can improve even the poorest memory. What's more, it can even work like magic to give you added poise, self-confidence and greater personal effectiveness. Everyone owes it to himself to find out more about this method.

Rapid Results
According to this remarkable man, anyone - regardless of his present skill - could, in just 20 minutes a day, improve his memory and concentration to a remarkable degree. For example, you need never for-



Forget names, faces?
get another appointment - ever! You could learn names, faces, facts, figures and foreign languages faster than you ever thought possible. You may be able to imprint whole books on your memory after a single reading. You could be more successful in your studies and examinations. At parties and dinners you may never again be at a loss for appropriate words or entertaining stories. In fact, you could even be more poised and self-confident in everything you say and do.

Free
To acquaint all readers of The Independent with the easy-to-follow rules for developing skill in remembering, we, the publishers, have printed full details of this interesting self-training method in a fascinating book, "Adventures in Memory", sent free on request. No obligation. No salesman will call. Just fill in and return the coupon on Page 7 (you don't even need to stamp your envelope), or write to: Memory and Concentration Studies (Dept. IDM78), FREEPOST 198, Manchester M60 8DL.

COLUMN ONE

So how much AC ever happened in DC?

A New Year is calculated to bring surprises. The first was a faxed invitation from *Playboy* to join their new 'sex and politics' tour of Washington. The second was the order from *The Independent* to 'drop everything' (well, given the context, perhaps not quite everything) to accept.

Now, looking for sex in Washington is - as the tour guide, James Petersen, explains - a bit like looking for the miniature Wally figure in those endlessly convoluted drawings. He should know. As author of *Playboy's* series 'History of the Sexual Revolution', he has been around a bit. He has already organised sex and politics tours of New York City and plans one also for San Francisco. But Washington presents a challenge of a different order.

It may well be, as we were told, and recent books confirm, that JFK had a sex life that even Hugh Hefner could envy. The problem for a tour company is that it was well shielded by the walls of the White House and protected by the Kennedy clan. William Jefferson Clinton (somehow WJC is never likely to sound convincing) has enjoyed less media defence so far as intimate matters are concerned. Living, serving presidents, though, seemed delicately off-limits.

Not that there would be much to show. WJC is said to have wanted the presidency so badly that his White House years may turn out to have been some of the most sexually pure in US presidential history. The raunchy stuff came earlier. The only allegations to the contrary relate to a supposed liaison conducted at dead of night at the downtown Marriott hotel, which he is said to have entered, Deep-Throat style, through the underground carpark. But the author of these claims now says his sources may have fabricated it all. Anyway, *Playboy* for once plays safe. The Marriott is not on the route.

One of the highlights, on the other hand, is the Washington townhouse of Gary Hart - he who lost his chance of the presidency through a dalliance with Ms Donna Rice on the good ship Monkey Business.

We had assembled an hour or so before outside Union Station, where the *Playboy* bus was already attracting curiosity from waiting taxi-drivers. Union station, we were told, was where the sexual-political history of Washington began, with the Mann law that laid men open to arrest for bringing young women across state borders for immoral purposes.

The whipped-up moral outrage that brought the law into being was just a prelude to the hypocrisy and law-bending that followed. The best collections of porn always belonged to the censor. Sex was seen as a nasty foreign intrusion into wholesome American life, probably French.

So hung-up were Americans about sex that Dorothy Sanger, America's answer to Marie Stopes, who spent 60 years campaigning for birth control, imported diaphragms from Holland in shipments of illegal gin. The tour stop that illustrates this gem of history, though, is the building of the National Civil Liberties Union - which only goes to show: in Washington, even *Playboy* has to search for sex.

MARY DEJEVSKY

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PEOPLE



Breaking news: Christiane Amanpour, star CNN foreign reporter, and Jamie Rubin, the wunderkind of the US State Department and its chief spokesman, have said they will marry in spring

Plug to be pulled on 'Larry Sanders Show'

There was more bad news for fans of American sitcoms yesterday when Gary Shandling, star of *The Larry Sanders Show*, told America's *TV Guide* magazine that the current series of his satire on talk shows would be the last. His announcement follows the decision of Jerry Seinfeld to end his sit-com, *Seinfeld*, this March. Both shows have garnered a cult following as a double bill late on Tuesday nights on BBC 2.

Newly filmed episodes of *The Larry Sanders Show*, which will air in March in America, have Shandling growing increasingly paranoid that his guest host, Jon Stewart, will take over his role as the network's number-one chat show host.

In an interview with *Time* magazine yesterday Seinfeld explained why he decided to drop his show. It has been reported that he had been offered \$5m (£3m) per episode to keep the sit-com going.

"I felt the moment. That's the only way I can describe it," said Seinfeld. "I just know from being on-stage for years and years, there's one moment where you have to feel the audience is still having a great time. And yet, if you wait a little bit longer and try to give them more for their money, they walk out feeling not as good. If I get off now I have a chance at a standing ovation." The final episode of *Seinfeld* will be aired in spring and be accompanied by a spoof documentary about the making of the show. However, Seinfeld dismissed rumours that the final show would see his character marry Elaine, the character played by Julia Louis-Dreyfus.

A BBC spokeswoman said it was sad both shows were going, but it would be years before their departures are seen by British audiences. "We are so far behind the Americans that we have a few years of each series left to show."

Paul McCann, Media Correspondent

BBC presenter defies cancer for comeback

Sports presenter Helen Rollason will return to the BBC's screens at the weekend after a six-month battle with cancer. Ms Rollason, who underwent an emergency operation for cancer of the colon five months ago, will present sports bulletins during news programmes on BBC 1 and BBC 2 at the weekend.

Ms Rollason was the first woman to present the BBC's flagship sports programme *Grandstand*.

The former *Newsround* presenter, 41, said she had felt "out of things" while off work: "I'm feeling fine, I'm on the way back. I hope. There is a long way to go yet," she told *BBC Breakfast News*.

"I'm only coming back part-time. I wish it was back to break-fast programmes straightaway but



Rollason: Grandstand first

at the moment I have got to leave that until I get myself really fit." In another development, the BBC and ITV announced they will split up the first six England and Scotland games of the World Cup finals in June. The BBC will broadcast the opening game, Scotland v Brazil, and England's first game, against Tunisia. The latter stages of the tournament will be simulcast by both channels.

Paul McCann

Tidy sum for mathematician

The man who solved Fermat's Last Theorem, one of the oldest mathematics problems, has found it wasn't an abstract effort after all: he has won a prize worth £125,000 in recognition of its use against computer eavesdropping.

Professor Andrew Wiles, 44, from Cambridge, works at Princeton University, in the US. In 1994 he solved the problem posed 350 years ago by Pierre de Fermat, who suggested the equation $a^n + b^n = c^n$ (where n is a superscript, ie 'a to the power n') has no solutions. Yesterday Prof Wiles was awarded the 1998 King Faisal International Prize for Science. Though the problem initially appeared to have no practical application, scientists now understand it could be used to make communications over systems such as the Internet more secure.

Charles Arthur, Science Editor

UPDATE

HEALTH

Nurses expect tough winter for NHS

Eight out of ten accident and emergency nurses believe the NHS would not be able to cope with any sudden escalation in demand this winter. A survey, published in *Nursing Standard*, found three-quarters of respondents felt the £300m the Government allocated last autumn to stave off a winter crisis would have little effect.

However, with continuing mild weather forecast for January and no sign of any flu epidemic, the feared escalation in demand has not happened. Measures taken last summer to prepare hospitals for the winter pressures appear to be working. The survey found three-quarters of hospitals had appointed bed managers and half the respondents said new beds had been opened in their hospitals although bed shortages were still a problem.

Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor

SEXUAL ATTITUDES

Women less aware of Aids danger

Twice as many women as men don't practice safe sex and are less likely to think that Aids is an issue when considering sex, according to a survey.

The magazine *Club-On* interviewed 100 men and women on clubbing about attitudes to sex and found that while 66 per cent of heterosexuals and 78 per cent of homosexuals practice safe sex, more than four out of five had engaged in unprotected sex.

The higher number of women - 31 per cent compared with 12 per cent of men - who say they don't practice safe sex is probably because messages have made greater impression on the gay community than amongst heterosexual couples. More than half of men and more than a third of women said they had had sex in a club and the majority of both sexes said they went to clubs "to pull".

Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent

LIFESTYLE

How it all figures out in Britain

The British are a nation of cat-loving, lottery-playing egg-devouring consumers, according to this year's official handbook of Britain. The 500-page book, published every year, details the minutiae of British life and is used in schools and embassies around the world.

Information ranges from the amount of eggs we consume - 9.48 billion in 1996 - to the number of journeys made on the London Underground last year - 772 million. It also reveals that Britons spent £28,015m on alcohol - more than they did on clothing - in 1996.

Dogs are no longer man's best friend now there are 7.2 million pet cats, compared to 6.6 million dogs in Britain. And our love for consumer durables continues, with some 69 per cent of Britons owning a car, a similar number owning their own home - while nine out of ten have a washing machine, 82 per cent have at least one video recorder and 75 per cent have a microwave. By 2001 the National Lottery is expected to have generated at least £10,000m - £1,000m more than originally forecast - for good causes.

Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.47	Italy (lira)	2,850
Austria (schillings)	20.06	Japan (yen)	214.80
Belgium (francs)	59.60	Malta (lira)	0.63
Canada (\$)	2.26	Netherlands (guilders)	3.25
Cyprus (pounds)	0.84	Norway (kroner)	11.86
Denmark (kroner)	11.05	Portugal (escudos)	292.56
France (francs)	9.66	Spain (pesetas)	243.13
Germany (marks)	2.90	Sweden (kroner)	12.82
Greece (drachmes)	460.37	Switzerland (francs)	2.35
Hong Kong (\$)	0.21	Turkey (lira)	329,182
Ireland (punts)	1.13	USA (\$)	1.59

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for Indian purposes only

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سكا من الامل

Murder charges dropped over lady in the lake

Murder charges were dropped yesterday against the husband of a retired primary school teacher whose body was found in a lake 21 years after she vanished. Gordon Park, said last night to be "very relieved", has appealed for privacy for his new family. Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, looks at the background.

The story hit the headlines last August when Carol Ann Park's body was found by amateur divers at the bottom of Coniston Water in the Lake District. Her former husband, Gordon Park, 53, was on a walking holiday in France with

his new wife Jennifer at the time, unaware of the discovery, and was arrested and charged with murder shortly after he returned to Britain. Mr Park had been awaiting committal for trial next week on the murder charges when the Crown Prosecution Service announced yesterday that the charges were being dropped through lack of evidence. In a statement the CPS said lawyers had carefully reviewed the circumstances surrounding Mrs Park's death before reaching the decision. "After a conference with leading counsel and the police, a decision was taken, in agreement with all parties, that there was insufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction." Unusually in such a difficult case, Cumbria police decided to charge Mr Park, who now works part time, without first seeking the advice of the CPS, whose job it is



Gordon Park: Lack of evidence

to decide on the likely success of any prosecution. It is understood the key problem was the lack of forensic evidence obtained from

a body which had been underwater for 21 years. Last night Mr Park's solicitor, Barbara Forrester, said he was "very much relieved" by the news, and appealed for privacy for him and his family. She said he had always maintained his innocence. It was too soon to consider any civil legal action by her client, she added. Mrs Park, also a primary school teacher, was 30 when she vanished from their home in Leece, near Barrow. She had not been regarded as a murder victim until last August when the divers found her body, still wearing a blue baby-doll nightdress, bound and weighted in 70ft of water. Before charging Mr Park with his first wife's murder, detectives had searched his home and a boat he kept moored on Coniston Water, where he had been a keen sailor for many years.

Mr Park, married three times, was granted bail on condition that he lived at an address in Tyldesley near Manchester while awaiting committal. The couple's grown-up children, Vanessa, who was eight when her mother disappeared, Jeremy, then six, and Rachel, then five, were interviewed by specialist officers to see if they could recall anything about the last time they saw their mother alive. The family had been due to visit Blackpool on a day trip when Mrs Park said she felt unwell and wanted to remain behind in bed. She was never seen again. Cumbria Police said last night they had not closed the case, which would continue to be "actively investigated". Detective Superintendent Ian Douglas, leading the investigation, said: "Work will continue in an attempt to bring this case to a satisfactory conclusion."

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT



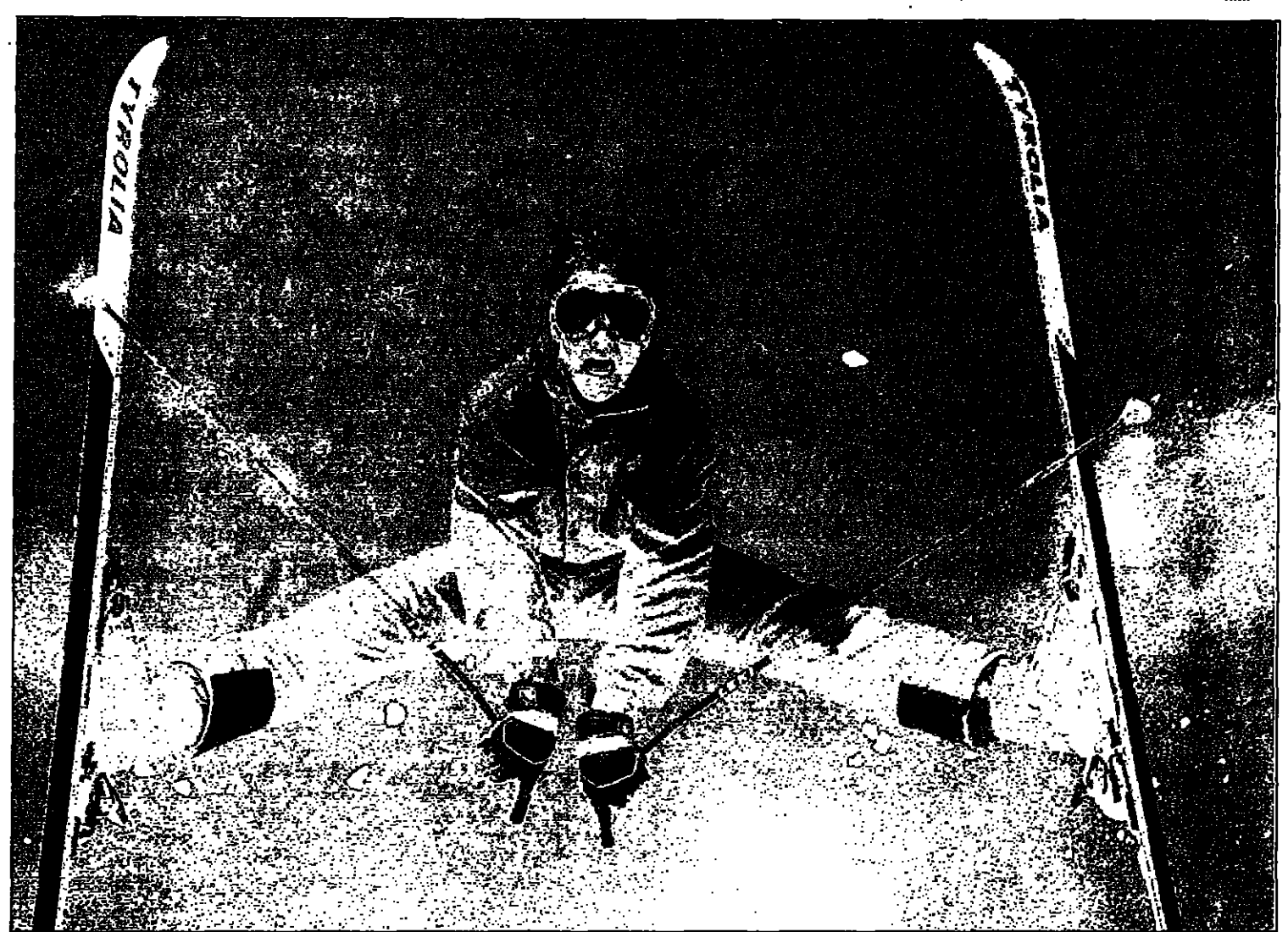
TAKING CONTROL:
How a working mum coped with an alcoholic nanny
FEATURES
Iain Banks:
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THE EYE
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THE EYE

Skiing is among safest of sports despite deaths of celebrities



Sonny Bono, the American pop singer-turned-congressman who has been killed in a skiing accident at an American resort, is the second celebrity to die on the slopes in less than a week. Nevertheless, as Kathy Marks reports, skiing remains one of the least dangerous sports.

was reported missing. Bono, who had skied at the sprawling resort for more than 20 years, was on a family holiday with his wife, Mary Whitaker, and their two children. He had skied on ahead, leaving the main trail to ski through a wooded area, when the accident happened. His wife raised the alarm when the resort closed at 4.30pm. Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, said yesterday that Bono would be much mourned by Republicans. He spoke of his "wonderful public service career", saying he had brought to it "a unique sense of talents and understanding from his celebrity days". His former wife, Cher, who was in London to open the Harrods January sale today, cancelled her appearance and flew to Los Angeles in order to be with the couple's daughter, Chastity, a campaigner for gay rights. Bono's death, following so quickly after that of Kennedy, 39, who also hit a tree, sent a shiver through the skiing industry, which has attracted record numbers of British enthusiasts this season. But despite the publicity given to these two high-profile deaths, and a perception that skiing has become progressively more dangerous, it actually claims few lives compared to other participant sports. Lethal accidents almost always happen when skiers leave safe areas. Dr Michael Turner, chief medical adviser to the British Ski and Snowboard Federation, who has compiled statistics on the relative dangers of different sports, says that downhill skiing has an injury rate of just 2.6 per 1,000 participant days - roughly the same risk as table tennis, and half that of golf. Rugby, on the other hand,



High life: Skiing accidents are rare, with only 2.6 per 1,000 suffering injuries. Most fatalities occur off-piste

with an injury rate of 95.7 per 1,000, and soccer, at 64.4, are far more perilous. Angling accounts for more deaths in Britain each year than any other outdoor activity - seven lives, compared to five for horse riding, five for mountaineering, three for parachuting, two for hang gliding and two for fell walking. David Hearn, spokesman for the Ski Club of Great Britain, said the vast majority of fatal accidents occur off-piste, with about half of them caused by avalanches. The remainder take place when skiers fall off a precipice or over the edge of a ravine, or hit a tree, pylon or hut. Collisions between skiers are extremely rare. **Obituary, page 17, and David Aaronovitch, page 19**

Music from a locked room: how I was first for 30 years to hear lost Stones tapes

David Lister yesterday sat in a locked room at the BBC and became the first person outside the corporation in 30 years to hear some of the earliest music by The Rolling Stones, including four tracks that have never been released.

Beatles and Led Zeppelin already released by BBC Worldwide to huge acclaim, it is now hoped that The Stones material will be released later this year. Having listened to 20 tracks and assorted interviews, I can reveal that the results are fascinating, raw, earthy blues and rock'n'roll, with moments of surprising tenderness. There is also one memorable interview with Keith Richards, his voice slurred, talking about "my quest for the holy grail, that cup of blood". Then, asked about parental fears about daughters going out with members of the group, he replies, again slurring: "I've 'ad a lot of trouble with mothers." It wouldn't get on the air now, muttered the stunned BBC executive next to me. And so to the music, introduced in many cases by the late blues musician Alexis Korner on his radio show. He pays tribute to "Mick Jagger vocalising there with the skillful guitar work of Brian Jones and Keith Richards". From Saturday Club in 1965 they sing "Satisfaction". "It only took us two hours to actually record it," Mick reveals. "That included arranging it



It's only rock'n'roll: Mick Jagger in the early Sixties

have to pump air into him." Then there are two Chuck Berry standards: "Roll Over Beethoven", a much rawer version than The Beatles' cover of the song, with Jagger making a rare ad-lib and perhaps anticipating his androgynous phase. Instead of "Don't you step on my blue suede shoes" he sings "Won't you step on my high heel boots?". In Berry's "Memphis Tennessee" there is a surprisingly tender Jagger vocal in front of Richards' finger picking guitar. Oddly though Jagger sounds very English here. "Just a half a mile from the Mississippi bridge" is enunciated as plumbly as if he is reminiscing about childhood in Dorset. The fourth unreleased track, "Fanny Mae", again has the late Brian Jones' swooping harmonica at its core. Snatches of this music were heard in the Eighties on a Radio One programme on the Stones. But much has never been heard for over 30 years. "It is astonishing," said John Willan, head of music at BBC Worldwide, "that no one has thought to release this before. It is outstanding - raw, unsophisticated and compelling."

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Maze meetings fail to soften loyalist attitude to talks

Tensions remained high in Northern Ireland yesterday as one set of loyalist prisoners stuck to their position of refusing to endorse the peace process. David McKerr, Ireland Correspondent, on desperate attempts to maintain the ceasefire.

Ulster Defence Association prisoners inside the Maze prison were apparently unmoved by arguments put forward by their political representatives, the Ulster Democratic Party, during a visit to the jail. Afterwards, UDP leader Gary McMichael described the situation as precarious.

Later, Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble and colleagues spent three hours visiting both UDA and Ulster Volunteer Force prisoners at the prison. UUP MP Ken Maginnis said of the inmates: "They are very concerned about the situation outside."

The Government is anxious that the loyalist ceasefire should be maintained, but is resisting demands to accomplish this by freeing loyalist prisoners. It is also anxious to ensure that those speaking for both the

UDA and UVF will be present when multi-party talks resume at Stormont next Monday. At the moment, the participation of both is in doubt. Mr McMichael said he intended to hold further meetings with the leadership of the UDA outside the prison and with the Secretary of State, Mr Mowlem.

Ms Mowlem also met the Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, who claimed that the UUP's refusal to engage in talks with republicans had created a vacuum which was being filled by loyalist killings of innocent Catholics. He declared: "The Orange card is being played and there is an attempt to assert a Unionist veto."

The Progressive Unionist party, political wing of the UVF, is to hold talks today with the Irish foreign minister, David Andrews, whom the party has recently accused of insensitivity. Mr Andrews said yesterday that he supported the UUP in seeking the early release of loyalist prisoners. Ms Mowlem has however said that she does not envisage such releases.

Opinions differ sharply on whether the present air of crisis is genuine or contains an element of contrivance. While some spokesmen have been at pains not to exacerbate the situation, others have sought to raise the temperature. Billy Wright's assassination inside the Maze clearly created a wave of turbulence which is buffeting the peace process. In nationalist circles there has been much comment on what is perceived to be a lack of condemnation from Unionism of the deaths of two Catholics killed in retaliation for the death of Wright.

A Belfast priest, Father Pad-

IRA men tortured by British officers

Military Intelligence papers released yesterday at the Public Records Office provide evidence that British officers tortured IRA men at the height of the Irish "Troubles" in 1920.

Sean Hales, from West Cork, who was shot in reprisal during the Civil War of 1922 which followed independence, and a man named Harte, were taken into a room at the British Army garrison in Bandon, where "six officers cross questioned them. It was alleged their fingers were broken and crushed with pliers and threats made to shoot them."

A card index kept by the Army's counter-insurgency branch at Dublin Castle includes a terse note on the torture of the two IRA's leading figures after they were picked up in a "sweep" of Cork by the security forces in July 1920.

An official inquiry showed that Hales attempted to escape and was hit in the mouth by a sentry. Later, both men were recognised by soldiers as being "concerned in the murder of a sergeant and a corporal of their own regiment, were roughly handled and placed under special guard. No other ill-treatment was afforded them," the paper noted.

They were fortunate. A Captain J. Hinkley of the IRA was "killed in a struggle in the guard room in Tipperary", the improbable excuse being "that

he was suffering from DTs". The report reads: "Harte had been under observation for two days and was ordered to hospital. When returned to the guard room he rushed at the escorting sergeant". Business premises in the town were burned down in reprisal and the file carries a suspicious question mark after a "troops not involved" annotation.

These files give for the first time official details of the savage guerrilla war which finally forced the British Government's hand in southern Ireland.

At New Year 1920, troops ran amok in Tipperary in revenge for an ambush, as a result of which 18-month sentences were handed down to soldiers of the Lincolnshire regiment.

On 1 September 1921, in an ambush reminiscent of John Wayne's cavalry attack in John Ford's *The Horse Soldiers*, 40 IRA men seized the railway station at Upton, cut the telephone lines, kept the staff of the adjacent post office telegraph station hostage and when the train steamed in with a party of the King's Regiment, opened up with a rifle volley. The troops returned the fire and the rebels fled.

Houses were regularly burned down and fines of £100 levied by the military authorities as reprisal for ambushes.

— John Crossland



Water world: Carolina Keast, helping out with problems caused by floods at the Swan Hotel in Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire, takes time off to feed the swans, which are exploring their expanded territory. Photograph: Barry Batchelor/PA

First trains for London's new Jubilee line arrive four months late

The first of a £250m fleet of Tube trains that will run on the multi-billion pound Jubilee Line Extension (JLE) pulled into passenger service yesterday.

Built to run on the one of the most fiendishly complicated engineering projects in decades, the first of the 59 trains arrived four months late. Despite the delay, passengers should welcome the new carriages - which are air conditioned and fitted with security cameras.

The £2.8bn JLE has proved more difficult to deliver than its designers imagined. The 10 miles linking east London to the West End was due to have been completed in 53 months, to open in March 1998. But now

it will only manage a limited service when it starts in September. Instead of a seamless journey from Westminster to Stratford, travellers will only be able to take trains from Waterloo to Docklands.

The JLE will be the main artery for the Millennium Dome - whose lifeblood, paying punters, will not be able to drive to the North Greenwich site. — Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent

But Mecca Bingo said the name change was not insensitive and was part of a policy of bringing their nationwide chain of bingo halls under one name. Sergeant Peter Shepherd, community liaison officer with Luton police, said: "It was unrealistic to expect that anything definite could be resolved at the meeting, but at least it was constructive to have the dialogue."

— Rosa Prince

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Grade of fame for humble prefabs

On Monday morning, after 10 years of mortgage payments, Olive Webb became the owner of her own home. The same afternoon, the Government announced that her property merited grade-two listing as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

The accolade, normally reserved for 17th-century country houses with lottery jackpot price-tags, was all the more notable for being awarded to a post-war, former council prefab house.

"I thought it was marvellous, all that in one day," Mrs Webb said yesterday. "But they are really nice places, nice and warm, though taxi-drivers think they are garages."



Mrs Webb, 69, lives in Wake Green Road, Moseley, Birmingham, where the row of 1945 temporary homes this week became the first prefabs to be given the listed accolade. "I think it's about time," added Mrs Webb, a former bus conductor. "They've weathered the storms. You'd be surprised

how many people come and ask if I want to sell."

For homes designed to last 10 years as a temporary solution to a housing shortage at the end of World War Two, the prefabs look solid. Most are well cared for, net curtains washed white, knick-knacks and ornaments bedecking

every inch of shelf. Barrie Walker (pictured above), has lived there for 25 years and was delighted the homes were going to be saved. When the house next door but one was left empty after a death, he had feared the worst. "I thought they were going to come down," he said. Tony Banks,

the Heritage Minister, decided otherwise. The houses in Wake Green Road are regarded as a particularly well preserved group of the rare Phoenix prefab, of which fewer than 2,500 were built.

Many, like Mrs Webb's, retain original features such as fitted interiors and garden

sheds. Pat and Lawrence Attenborough moved in 30 years ago, expecting to stay a few years. "My wife loves it here," said Mr Attenborough, 58. "She would go mad if she moved out now."

Maggie Harrison, 74, has no intention of moving either. She has only one gripe about

her home: the central heating put in by the council two years ago, which she doesn't like.

But she likes the space - two bedrooms, kitchen, living-room, bathroom and separate lavatory.

— Louise Jury
Photograph: Steve Hill

Slow legal process is blamed for gazumping

Gazumping flourishes in the English and Welsh housing markets because of red tape and some of the slowest conveyancing in the world.

According to a Government report published yesterday, says Steve Boggan, the delay between making an offer and exchanging contracts is so long in England and Wales that vendors often succumb to the temptation of a higher offer.

Scotland. In Scotland, there is no problem with gazumping - where a vendor accepts a higher price having already agreed a lower price with an earlier buyer - because buyers and sellers exchange contracts at an early stage.

This study shows that the overall costs of buying and selling a house in England and Wales are the lowest of all the countries reviewed, but the total time taken to exchange contracts and complete is amongst the longest," Ms Armstrong said.

She said that the task force's next job would be to examine causes of delay and root them out. The larger survey would, she said, "identify problem areas and look at ways of improving the efficiency of the process in the interests of all responsible, home buyers and sellers."

Also on the task force and Geoff Hoon, parliamentary secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department, and consumer affairs minister Nigel Griffiths.

The Law Society, which is involved in the research, said one of the reforms which might come out of the findings is the introduction of a "compulsory seller's information pack". This would contain details of surveys, searches and so on, which would speed up the exchange procedure.

Kenneth Byass, chairman of the society's property and commercial services committee, said the research reflected positively on solicitors. "The costs of buying a £60,000 house are about 2.5 per cent in England and Wales, far cheaper than many other jurisdictions," he said. "[They] rise to 6 per cent in France and a staggering 10 per cent in Portugal."

Red tape and infuriatingly slow conveyancing are encouraging gazumping in house sales, says a government report published yesterday. On the positive side, however, the study - set up following a flurry of reports of gazumping in the booming housing market - found that conveyancing costs in England and Wales were among the lowest in the world.

Among the countries looked at by a team led by housing minister Hilary Armstrong, the United States, France, Portugal, Denmark, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, the Australian state of New South Wales and the Canadian province of Ontario all had more expensive conveyancing charges than England and Wales.

Ms Armstrong released the details yesterday at the start of a bigger survey which will follow the progress of 1,200 property sales south of the border compared with a sample in

Tell colleagues to 'have a nice day' or lose your job

It is no longer enough to be good at your job, a senior psychologist believes. Barrie Clement, Labour Editor, discovers you now have to adopt a "have a nice day" manner, even with colleagues, or risk being accused of having an attitude problem.

worked for American-owned fast food chains.

Now "have a nice day" culture has invaded the back offices of British companies, according to Sandi Mann, a psychologist at Salford University.

The climate of downsizing, restructuring and increasingly fierce competition means that people feel the need to appear "interested, enthusiastic, warm and friendly" at all times - even when there are no customers present.

A failure to put on the right front carries the risk of being seen as "less of a team player,

as having an attitude problem, or as being difficult to work with". Such an employee could soon find a P45 in the internal mail, Ms Mann told the British Psychological Society's annual occupation psychology conference in Eastbourne.

The psychologist attempts to debunk, however, the theory that Britons find the "nice day" culture offensive.

She asserts that the British quite like the phoney civility - some would say servility - exhibited by representatives of companies in the service sector.

Yet we expect sincerity when

dealing with colleagues. In the US, the reverse is true. Americans will put up with relative indifference from those providing services, but expect colleagues to exude warmth.

"Being fake is stressful and attempting to make fake emotional displays appear genuine is even more stressful. So the waitress who plasters on the fake smile for customers is at less risk from stress-related illness than the office worker who must not only fake enthusiasm and interest to colleagues, but must work hard at making such displays appear genuine."

In her paper "Don't Tell Me To 'Have A Nice Day'" she says that expected emotions are faked in about a quarter of in-house communications. Undesired emotions are suppressed in 10 per cent of cases.

Ms Mann conducted her survey among around 100 students in both America and Britain, all of whom had considerable experience of employment.

Regular exercise helps you avoid work-related stress, but it isn't easy to encourage people to do it.

It is no good telling em-

ployees they will live longer and feel better, according to psychologists.

The best way to motivate people to take exercise is by telling them that it will improve their looks or give them the "mental edge" at work.

"People are essentially not interested in their long term health, they are interested in looking more beautiful."

"An appeal to their vanity is the best way to encourage them to exercise," said Howard Taylor, head of psychology at Buckinghamshire University College.

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Cook: Enjoying the world

Cook tells how Scotland will have to wait a little longer for him

Robin Cook is mildly amused, he says, but Scotland will have to wait a little longer for him. Reports that he was ready to become first minister of the first Edinburgh parliament were merely the product of bored, festive-season journalistic minds, he told the Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Asked if he was more world-weary than when he became Foreign Secretary last May, he replied that he was not. "If I was, I would be going to Scotland," he said. "I very much enjoy the world and I hope to have a long session with it."

An attempt to squash the

stories last weekend had failed, he said, so he would try again. "I have a very full agenda for the Foreign Office in the future. I want to make it more open, accessible, modern, representative of modern Britain, responding to the needs and wishes of the people. These are long-term projects," he said.

The longest stint as foreign secretary this century was Lord Gray's 11 years, he added. Although he might not make that he "wouldn't mind a crack at" the post-war record of six years, set by Geoffrey Howe.

Rumours that he and the Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, had a bitter rivalry over the

job were untrue, he said. The suggestion was "mildly upsetting" – the two men were the best of friends and had actually spoken in the last week. "I am staying as Foreign Secretary. I am not applying for any other job in Scotland or anywhere else we have discussed this afternoon," he said.

Everyone in the new Scottish parliament would find it a "very rich and exciting job. But for better or worse, I am happy to be in a job I enjoy very much and I am not in the market for looking for a new job," he said.

Mr Cook had been pressed on the subject by Diane Abbot,

the Labour MP for Hackney, during a session which mainly centred on the Government's policies on human rights. "I think it would be a fundamental human right of the committee to continue to see me for many years to come," he said.

— Fran Abrams

Call for a recount in Welsh poll

Anti-devolution campaigners in Wales called for a recount last night after claims that September's knife-edge referendum vote may have been mishandled. Fran Abrams, Political Correspondent, asks whether the conspiracy theorists have a case.

At Labour's annual conference in Brighton last October Ron Davies, the Secretary of State for Wales, was heard boasting that the "yes" vote in his Caerphilly constituency had swung the vote for the Government.

The majority there in favour of a Welsh Assembly had been 6,000 – just below the narrow overall majority in Wales of 6,700. But even as he made the boast he knew some of his own members were deeply unhappy about the way the count had been conducted.

Leaked Labour Party documents reveal that members of the Caerphilly branch drew up a list of 11 complaints after the referendum. Among them were claims that counting officers would not identify which were "yes" and which "no" votes, that the franks by which officials usually check papers are genuine were almost impossible to see, and that polling agents were not allowed to check the final bundles.

In a letter to Tony Wilkins, their own chairman, they acknowledged: "Ultimately 'the buck' stops at the Welsh Office and we realise that politically we have to be extremely careful because of Ron's position there."

The returning officer has since said he does not believe there were serious irregularities, and party members have retracted their claims.

However, the Conservatives in Westminster and "no" campaigners in Wales are

determined not to let the matter drop. Some have even suggested that there was unhappiness with the way the count went in other areas, as well.

The rules for the referendum were certainly different from those for elections – the Referendums (Scotland and Wales) Act contains 23 pages of modifications to the Representation of the People Act – and some sceptics have asked why this was necessary.

However, there may also have been some mistakes. Mr Wilkins, who was liaison officer on the night as well as being branch chairman, dismissed the allegations but added: "It was evident for all to see that chaos ruled the night and no one was in control."

Yesterday Matthew Gunther-Bushell, strategist for the "Just Say No" campaign, said the votes cast in the referendum on 18 September should be recounted to ensure that the outcome was correct.

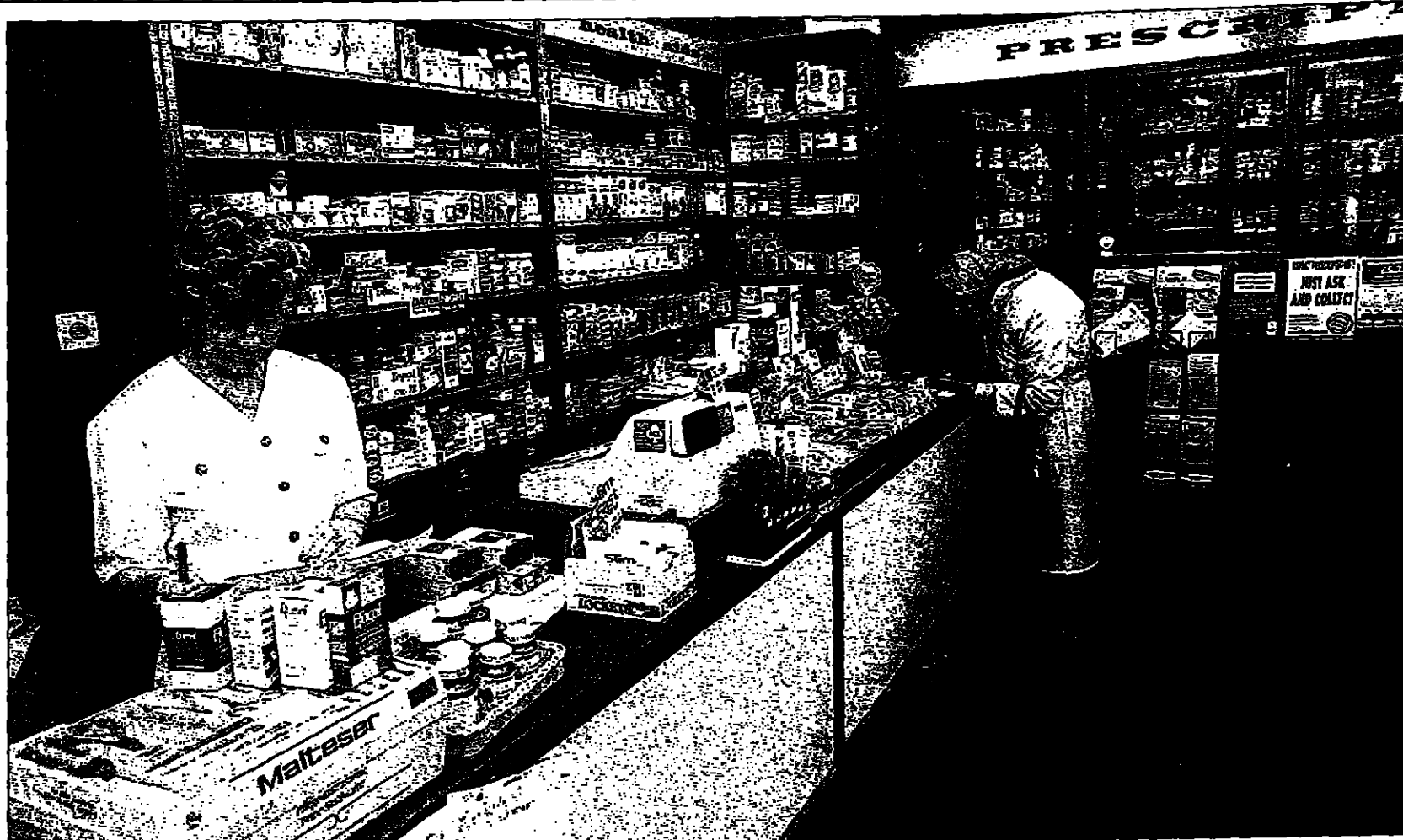
"This whole situation certainly seems to cast a shadow of doubt on the way the referendum was conducted," he said.

Michael Ancram, the Conservatives' constitutional spokesman, intends to raise the matter in Parliament when it returns next week.

"Throughout this story there is a distinct smell of cover-up, even eluded to directly in the leaked correspondence. It is vital that this whole matter is publicly cleared up as soon as possible," he said.

Mr Davies defended himself robustly, though. The letter was written three months ago and concerned mainly technical matters which had now been fully investigated, he said in a BBC interview.

"There is no question of either impropriety or any question about the vote itself. I want to make it absolutely clear that nobody at any time as suggested there has been impropriety, nor has there been any suggestion that the vote was flawed," he said.



Over the counter: Pharmacists who run chemist shops are concerned they may go out of business if the Government allows a free-for-all on drug prices

Pharmacists say price free-for-all will put them out of business

Pharmacists who run chemist shops will warn ministers this week that they risk going out of business if the government allows a free-for-all on the price of over-the-counter medicines such as cough medicine and pain-killers.

The community pharmacy action group leaders will meet Baroness Jay, the health minister, in the Lords on Friday to urge the Government to accept last-minute

amendments to the Competition Bill during its final stages in the upper chamber.

They fear the Bill would allow chain stores to undercut small chemists in towns and villages by abolishing the guaranteed minimum price for non-prescription items. They are arguing they need their guaranteed profit margins to stay in business.

They have hired a professional Westminster lobby company, Lawson, Lucas,

Mendelsohn, to build their campaign to have non-prescription items excluded. Twelve thousand pharmacists will be urged next week to lobby their MPs.

John Redwood, the Tory spokesman on trade and industry, is threatening to lead a mass rally to Parliament to protest against the threat to small businesses.

Asda supermarkets, whose former chairman, Archie Norman, is a Tory MP

and a key figure in Tory Central Office, challenged retail price maintenance on vitamins but was forced to back down when the store tried to offer substantial price cuts to customers.

Mr Redwood is also raising the anxieties of pubs and brewers over a section of the Bill which could question the links between brewers and tied houses as anti-competitive.

— Colin Brown

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Euro-MPs are expelled from Socialist Group

Two "Old" Labour Euro-MPs have been expelled from the Socialist Group of the European Parliament. Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr, who last week attacked Tony Blair's plans for welfare cuts, were told by the group's leader yesterday that their application to sit with Green members of the Strasbourg assembly disqualified them from continued membership as Socialists.

They are also barred from standing in the next Strasbourg elections as "Independent Labour" candidates. Pauline Green, the Socialist leader, said. The Labour Party's leadership in the European Parliament also told the rebels their action automatically disqualified them from membership of the EPLP. Complete expulsion from the Labour Party could now follow when the National Executive Committee meets at the end of January.

Mrs Green paid tribute to the work of the two, particularly Mr Coates (Nottingham North and Chesterfield), who has conducted extensive research into unemployment throughout Europe.

— Katherine Butler, Brussels

Conservative leader William Hague will appeal to his party over the heads of the 12 pro-Europe grandees, with a ballot on his policy opposing the euro. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, hears Mr Hague warn the dissidents he will not be "blackmailed" like his predecessors Baroness Thatcher and John Major.

A referendum of the Conservative Party will be used by William Hague to neutralise the attack on his leadership by the 12 Tory grandees and secure endorsement for his policy ruling out entry to a single currency for a decade.

Dismissing the group, who signed a letter to *The Independent* opposing Mr Hague's policy on Europe, as Yesterday's Men, Mr Hague said he was confident his party would give him overwhelming backing. He warned the dissidents, who included two former party chairmen, an ex-Chancellor and a former foreign secretary, they would have to "jump it".

His uncompromising stand was supported by Michael Portillo, who said: "I am a firm supporter of William Hague's policy on Europe. Those who have signed the letter to *The Independent* support Mr Blair's policy."

Mr Hague, who is to face Kenneth

NEVER INHALED

● Pressed on whether he had ever inhaled cannabis, Mr Hague said: "No, I never had any myself but I know quite a few people who have." He said he had seen people's lives ruined with drugs at university.

He said he occasionally enjoyed a glass of wine or beer and the last time he had "a little bit too much" to drink was at his wedding in December.

● On his wife's choice of outfits, Mr Hague said: "Yes, she is quite a sunnier, a wonderful lady."

On whether they were planning to start a family, he said: "Maybe some time in the future, certainly not immediately."

"She has got her own career, just as I have got mine and I think we settle into married life before we embark on a family."

Clarke and leaders of the Tory Positive European Group in a showdown, said on BBC Radio Five Live: "If the party supports me on this policy – and there is every indication that it will do – then other people will have to like it or lump it."

"Anybody who says to me, 'You change your policy or I leave the party' – well the policy will stay the same."

Ian Taylor, who quit Mr Hague's front bench in protest at his harder line on Eu-

rope said: "If that makes him feel better, so be it, but it's not the point."

"The point is that 12 of us representing a very great number of people in the Conservative Party want to try to provide moderate advice which should help the Conservative Party regain a degree of stature in the country as a whole."

The Liberal Democrat foreign affairs spokesman, Menzies Campbell, said: "It is now clear from what Mr Hague is saying that he contemplates a split in the Tory party." Mr Campbell urged disgruntled Tories to join his party.

The Prime Minister's office added fuel to the fire by releasing extracts from an interview with the German ambassador to London, Gebhardt von Molke, welcoming the change of tone by Tony Blair's government. "The Blair government has become a team player on European policy. This will also be documented by the British presidency in the first half of 1998 which will be dominated by EU interests," he said.

Mr Blair will underline the Government's commitment to Europe tomorrow at the launch of Britain's six-month presidency of the EU in London with Commission president, Jacques Santer.

However, Tory activists said Mr Hague had the support of the vast majority of the Tory party. Cate (Conservatives Against a Federal Europe), is ready to claim its membership has risen by over 1,000 in recent weeks to 4,500.

Letters, page 18

New tough line on prescription fraud

Fines are to be imposed to tackle fiddles on prescriptions by patients which are costing the NHS an estimated £115m a year. Colin Brown says health minister Alan Milburn will today announce a crackdown on prescription fraud.

A crackdown on prescription fraud by patients, pharmacists and doctors is to be announced today by Alan Milburn, the health minister, following an efficiency scrutiny in Whitehall which warned that fraud could

be costing the NHS up to £115m a year in lost revenue from prescription charges.

The exact extent of the fraud, however, was difficult to assess.

It is expected that the minister will give the go-ahead to plans raised when the report was published last year for a new criminal offence of evading payment of the prescription charge and a fixed penalty for non-payment.

Measures are being taken for the first time to stop theft of prescription forms, and counterfeiting. There could be a reward scheme for pharmacies which detect stolen or counterfeit prescriptions.

Mr Milburn said when the report was published that the findings were "quite frankly staggering". He said if the NHS had been able to spend the money lost through fraud, it could have carried out an extra 14,500 heart bypass operations.

The report said that anything between £70m and £100m could be lost through patient evasion of the £5.65 charge, including falsely claiming entitlement to free prescriptions. Exemptions include all children under 16, pregnant or nursing mothers, pensioners, medical conditions such as epilepsy, 16-19-year-olds in full-time education, and all those on income support or family credit.

More money is believed to be lost through organised fraud by doctors and pharmacists. The Audit Commission in a separate report cited cases of doctors who sold drugs prescribed for non-existent patients, chemists who claimed for expensive branded drugs while supplying patients with cheaper unbranded types, and three opticians who claimed an extra £25,000 for tinted lenses by adding it to the prescriptions after they had been signed by patients.

The NHS efficiency scrutiny team found no case where an individual had been charged with evading prescription charges, although it constituted a criminal

offence. It said the deliberate evasion of charges should be defined explicitly and treated as a criminal offence to give "proper weight to the seriousness of deliberate fraud against the NHS." Other measures to stop patients claiming they were entitled to exemptions include a check on their birth date.

The team stressed that most GPs and pharmacists were honest but some were engaged in fraud, which had been going on since the time of Chaucer, the writer who chronicled medieval life. The report included this quotation from *The Canterbury Tales*: "The druggist to ensure his further self, split profits twixt our doctor and himself."

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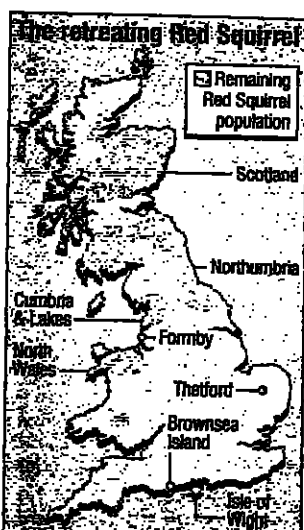
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Island sanctuary for lost creatures of Middle England

The red squirrel has died out in central England, it was revealed yesterday. As the deadly and relentless march of its American Grey cousin continues, Ian Burrell says that islands could be the only havens for one of the nation's favourite mammals.

On the Isle of Wight, where the waters of the River Solent have so far kept the grey squirrel at bay, emergency measures are being taken by the island council to save the 1,500-strong red population.



A supply of squirrel traps has been brought in from the mainland to ensnare greys that have arrived as stowaways on board ferries. A network of lookouts has been established across the island to report sightings of greys to council officers.

Colin Pope, the council's ecology officer, said: "We have had one grey squirrel washed up on the beach on the north side of the island and some have been seen swimming in the Solent, but the distance and the strong currents are too great for them."

The need to protect the Isle of Wight's red squirrels, and a smaller colony on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour, Dorset, was underlined yesterday by news of the demise of the red squirrel in the Midlands.

There was once an abundant population of reds in the former Royal hunting forest at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire, but ecologists admitted yesterday that it had been wiped out by the grey. Debby Smith, who has been studying squirrels at Cannock Chase since 1993, said: "It is a sad fact that there have been no reliable reports of reds in Cannock Chase since 1994."

The new finding means that there is no longer an established red squirrel population on the English mainland, south of Formby in Merseyside. The populations in the north of England and in Wales are also at grave risk. Since it arrived in Britain in 1876, the grey's numbers have grown to an estimated 2.5 million. By contrast, the red squirrel is down to 160,000, with only 30,000 in England.

In an experiment aimed at reversing the trend, Tony Mitchell-Jones, mammal ecologist at English Nature, is overseeing a project in which 35 reds from the north of England have been reintroduced to woodlands in Thetford, Norfolk. Their food supplies are being protected from the greys, whose numbers are being controlled.

At one point, near the river Tay, the two types of squirrel live in apparent harmony with greys sticking to their broadleaved woodlands and the reds to conifer forest.

But David Bullock, nature conservation adviser at the National Trust, said such conditions were rare. "If the grey ... was ever to establish itself on the Isle of Wight it may well be the demise of the red squirrel there," he said, adding that it could be because greys outcompete reds or because they spread disease. Either way, "we've got to make sure it never happens", he said.



Holding out: The red squirrel has finally disappeared from the Midlands, replaced by the larger grey squirrel, but it is flourishing in the Isle of Wight where residents take emergency measures to eliminate invading greys
Photograph: Martin Rieger

Warmer weather may bring colour to farmers' fields

The expected rise in Britain's summer and winter temperatures over the next 50 years could be accompanied by a visually explosive change in the landscape with fields of sunflowers and red clover. Stephen Goodwin reports from Oxford where farmers and scientists have been doing some crystal-ball gazing.

A farming conference entitled "The Real World" might attract a hollow laugh from critics who believe farmers are subsidy junkies with a disproportionate sway over government policy.

Jack Cunningham, the agriculture minister, yesterday once again tried to disabuse farmers of the idea that they are going to be given any more money to compensate for the rise in value of sterling against the European Union's green currency.

"The idea of an £890m gift from Brussels is nonsense," he said, slapping down the National Farmers' Union demand for compensation in the opening session of the 52nd Oxford Farming Conference. At least 71 per cent of the money would have to come from the British taxpayer.

But farmers are going to have to adjust to a lot more than lower prices for their crops and livestock. By the middle of the next century Britain is expected to be between 1.2C and 1.6C warmer.

Professor Trevor Davies, di-

rector of the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, said the chances of a return of the very hot summer of 1995 would increase from one-in-90 years to one-in-three years. At Oxford, days over 25C would increase from 12 a year to about 20 by 2050, while frosty days would fall from 42 to 18.

More disturbing could be a water shortage. Stream flows could reduce by 30 per cent by 2020. More water will simply evaporate in the extra heat, but by far the biggest loss will be that sweated out by plants.

But on balance, it looks as if farmers could benefit.

Experts believe the combination of warmer summers and tougher varieties of crop introduced by plant breeders could add blocks of yellow sunflowers to the landscape of the South and East. The oil-rich plant is already moving north in France and could soon follow fields of blue linseed over the channel.

But the crops most likely to prosper from a rise in temperature are the potato and forage maize, grown for silage. Professor Christopher Pollock, research director at the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (Iger) said computer modelling predicted central and even northern England would become suitable for growing early potatoes. However, main-crop potatoes might suffer in the drier summers.

Another dash of colour could be added to the countryside with red clover. It is protein-rich and one of the alternative forages Iger has been working on. "When you see your first field of that you will be blown away," said the professor.

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Round the world rally challenge

They survived the recent Peking to Paris rally and now some of the successful drivers want to compete in the Around the World in 80 Days Motor Challenge. Among the drivers wanting to take part are Chris and Jan Dunkley, who found their Bentley Special full of rotting mushrooms in a field and lovingly restored it. They are hoping to drive 21,000 miles to complete the longest car rally in history.

The 1907 Peking to Paris rally was set up by the Paris newspaper *Le Matin*, which wanted to prove that the new-fangled motor car could go anywhere and break down frontiers. It was followed up a year later with the New York to Paris rally - until now the only event to try and circumnavigate the globe.



Driven to distraction: A lion dance in London's Chinatown yesterday celebrating the success of three of the rally cars Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Christmas drink-drive pleas fail to cut crashes

A hard core of motorists are continuing to drink and drive during Christmas, new figures reveal. Jason Bennetto and Jeremy Riggall examine the evidence of an increase in the number of drivers involved in accidents while over the limit.

Twelve out of sixteen police forces in England and Wales have reported an increase in the number of car crashes involving drunk drivers.

Early figures suggest that the anti-drink drive message is failing to make inroads into a small but significant number of motorists - typically middle-aged men - who get into their vehicles while over the limit.

The provisional figures, however, add weight to calls by the police and doctors for a lowering of the alcohol limit to about one pint of beer. The Government is due to consider a two-tier system with a lesser penalty for people caught on one pint of strong ale or two glasses of wine. The current maximum level is just over two pints or four measures of spirits.

The national picture for the 43 forces in England and Wales is likely to remain confused because of the different counting systems now used by the police. Totals for the remaining 27

police forces have yet to be analysed. Also, as in previous years, the Association of Chief Police Officers has failed to provide a regional breakdown and only includes positive tests that are taken at the scene of a crash.

Early result show that during December there was an increase on last year in the proportion of drunk drivers involved in accidents in the Metropolitan Police area, Hampshire, Dorset, Leicestershire, Cumbria, Norfolk, Northumbria, Surrey, Wiltshire, Humberside, Northamptonshire and Essex. There was a decline in Greater Manchester, Suffolk, Lancashire and Dyfed-Powys.

The continued refusal of a small band of drinkers to leave their vehicles at home was condemned by police officers yesterday. Inspector Mick May of Surrey Police said: "The figures show that the vast majority of motorists have acted responsibly and heeded the anti-drink-drive message, but there is still a hardcore who get caught up in the festivities and insist on driving. These people give no thought for the consequences of their actions."

Superintendent Keith Mavin, of Northumbria, said: "People who drink and drive are a menace to society."

Assistant Chief Constable Ian Moody, of Cheshire Police, added: "There is a hard core of drivers who are willing to put their own lives and those of others at risk."

Auditors criticise Dome procedures

The company in charge of the Millennium Exhibition broke the rules when it let contracts for planning, marketing and sponsorship, according to an internal auditors' report.

KPMG found that in one case work had started before a legally binding contract was in place. In others, there was insufficient evidence that contracts had been let on a competitive basis or with clear specifications. Sir John Bourne, the Comptroller and Auditor General, has said in a report to Parliament that he finds the processes used "unsatisfactory".

The report, published at Westminster yesterday, relates to the period from October to December 1996, before the new government and the New Millennium Experience Company took over. It says that in the few months after Barry Hartop took over as chief executive of Millennium Central, the company in charge at the

time, there were fears about the way contracts were being let.

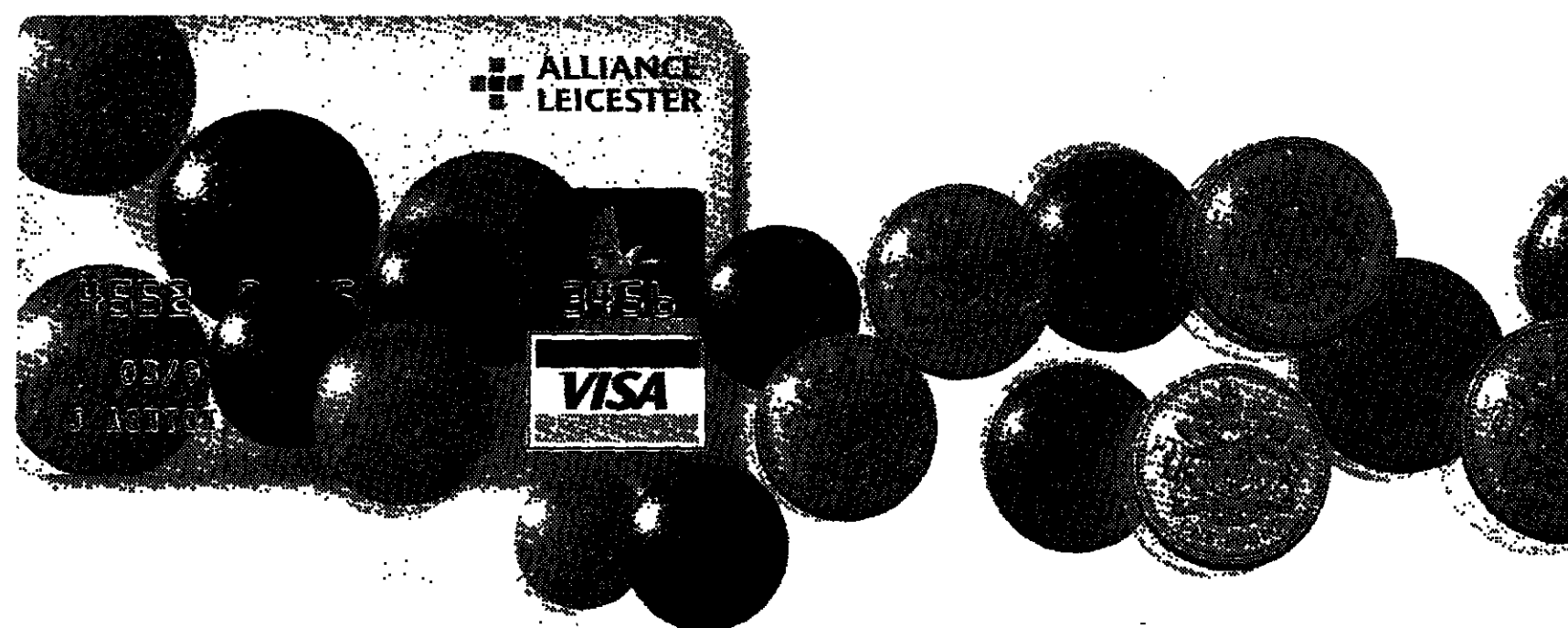
KPMG were asked to look at the main 15 contracts, amounting to some £500,000. The auditors found that only three followed the procurement procedures agreed with the Millennium Commission.

A separate report by the National Audit Office found that a number of payments made at around the same time were irregular, although not sufficiently serious to justify further action.

Eric Sorensen, the chief executive of the Millennium Commission, said the errors had mainly been technical ones of documentation, and he was confident that the problems had now been cleared up. "The report also makes clear there is no fraud or corruption and things were put right at the time," he said.

— Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent
Andrew Marr, page 19

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Well prepared: The court ruling will decide if agnostics Michael (left) and William Randall qualify for Eagle Scout badges Photograph: AP

Dutch gay couple make history with first same-sex 'marriage'

The Netherlands nailed its liberal colours to the mast yesterday when it allowed two men to "marry" in a civil ceremony for the first time. They were both elderly and one is terminally ill in hospital - but they still made legal history by being the first to take advantage of a new law extending marriage rights to same-sex couples from the start of the year.

A lesbian couple had been expected to be the first to tie the knot under the law in mid-January, after giving the authorities the statutory two weeks notice. As a concession to the life-threatening illness of one of the two men in question, they went first instead.

The new "Registration of partnership" in the Netherlands follows a pattern established in several Scandinavian countries over the past three years, by extending to gay couples all the rights adhering to the traditional civil marriage, with the exception of joint adoption.

Even this hurdle may soon be

overcome in the Netherlands. As the law now stands, there is no bar on single gay men or lesbians adopting a child, and the centre-left government appears to be moving towards allowing couples the right jointly to adopt as well.

Gay "marriages" were, until recently, the preserve of unofficial religious or secular bonding ceremonies, none of which had any sanction in law. But increasing acceptance of openly gay lifestyles in the West is creating pressure for changes. In Hawaii last year the state's supreme court decided it was discriminatory to deny them a legal civil marriage, though this ruling is under appeal.

In Europe, Denmark led the way by allowing gay couples to register as "partnerships" in 1989, followed by Norway and Sweden in 1995 and by Greenland and Iceland in 1996. Greenland alone already allows joint custody adoption.

Even in Britain change is afoot. Last year, after a test case, the new Labour government allowed unmarried couples of whatever sexual combination to apply for residency on behalf of their non-EU partners.

But "white weddings" in church still seem a long way off. In Norway a recent furore over the ordination of a lesbian minister in the official Lutheran church shows there is still resistance to conflating gay "partnerships" with marriage in the complete, traditional sense.

Many gay-rights activists question whether they should be fighting for the right to live a "straight" lifestyle. Peter Tatchell, of the OutRage! pressure group, claims less than 10 per cent of Danish gay couples have taken up their new right to be "married" since 1989, and, although he opposes the ban on gay marriage, because it is discriminatory, adds: "We don't believe queers should copy a fundamentally flawed heterosexual institution." — Marcus Tanner

Boy Scouts promise to stay straight and narrow

Only straight, God-fearing males need apply to the Boy Scouts of America. Tim Cornwell finds the organisation's stubborn refusal to make PC concessions has California judges struggling to do the right thing.

If the Boy Scouts could legally bar "avowed homosexuals", California Supreme Court Justice Kathryn Werdegar wondered, couldn't they also bar African Americans? But if the Scouts had to admit gays, a colleague asked, couldn't an all-women's college be forced to admit men? In recent years, the Boy Scouts of America has spent millions of dollars fending off law suits from gays, girls, and atheists intent on joining the organisation.

Conservatives say it is a prime case of America's legal system run amok. But the issue reached California's highest court this week, after lower court judges had jumped both ways. The technical question was whether the Boy Scouts, by selling uniforms, camping equipment, and other items required to Be Prepared, qualified as a business.

If so, they were clearly covered by anti-discrimination laws. The judges, it appeared, were inclined to agree with the Scouts that they remained a private charitable group. But they were clearly troubled by the Boy Scouts' right to keep new recruits "morally straight", under rules written at the turn of the century, in a famously permissive state where the gay community is a powerful political voice.

Controversy has swirled around the Boy Scouts of America since at least 1991, when twins William and Michael Randall, aged nine, refused to recite the words of the Cub Scout Promise promising to "do my

duty to God and my country". Living in deeply conservative Orange County, they were expelled from Pack 519, and their father, a lawyer, filed suit. The court yesterday heard from James Randall and lawyers in another case, brought by a Los Angeles Scout master who was barred because he is gay.

Any ruling would extend to several similar suits in California, including one from a 12-year-old girl. Katrina Yeaw has sued to join because she wants to learn canoeing, camping, and other outdoor skills with her twin brother Daniel, who is a member.

The Randall twins - self-declared agnostics - having won the earlier rounds in the courts continued Scouting, and at the age of 16 they are about to qualify for their Eagle Scout badges, the Scouts' highest honour. James Randall, their father, told the court that the Scouts "acts like a business, operates like a business, and it runs a business. If it operates like, talks like, thinks like a duck, then it must be a duck."

Jon Davidson, a lawyer for former assistant Scout master Timothy Curran, made a more emotional appeal. Mr Curran was expelled shortly after bringing a male date to his high school prom. But his client did not enlist in an organisation called "The Heterosexual Boy Scouts of America," Mr Davidson said. "In addition to being a perfect role model and leader, he was also gay."

The Scouts argue that changing the rules for membership would lead religious groups to end their affiliation. On other hand, businesses such as Levi Strauss have withdrawn support because of the organisation's ban on atheists and gays. Their attorney, George Davidson, held up a Boy Scout book in court, saying: "There's God on the front cover, and God on the back cover."

The court is due to rule in March.



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End of term: Pupils at Potter Heigham First School in Norfolk, just before the Christmas holidays. All 21 pupils have been sent to alternative schools

Parent power closes down school

A Norfolk primary school faces likely closure after parents withdrew their children following a critical report. Andrew Buncombe reports on an ultimate expression of parent power.

Potter Heigham First School is silent. The two classrooms, their walls decorated with pupils' brightly coloured paintings and drawings, are empty. The playground, with its white markings for games and surrounding railings, is equally deserted. Even the school secretary, Julie Crabb, has been sent

home. "We are a school without pupils," she sighed yesterday. "We don't really know what is going to happen. It really is a very sad situation. It will be very sad for the village if the school has to shut."

The situation, which resulted in the teachers turning up on Monday for the start of the new term but finding none of the 21 pupils there to teach, is the result of parents' concern about failing standards.

An Ofsted report carried out in July 1996 found that standards at the school, located within the Norfolk Broads National Park, were unsatisfactory in a number of subjects. An action plan was drawn up but return visits by the inspection team last October and November found that things

had got worse rather than better. The inspector said teaching was unsatisfactory, that pupils' reading, writing and numeracy were not adequate, and called for special measures. "Pupils ... make poor overall progress during their time at school," the inspection concluded.

While this report was only published yesterday, parents were informed of its contents at a meeting with governors last November. The governors said that with their current resources - the school had just two teachers - it was impossible to deal with the shortcomings.

As a result, the parents of every pupil at the 104-year-old school decided to find alternative schools for their children, all aged between four and eight.

Lynne Sheppard, vice-chairman of the governors and a former teacher at the school, said yesterday: "... everyone is devastated at the potential loss of our local school but we understand that parents have to put the education of their children first."

Mrs Sheppard, who has had to find an alternative school for her own five-year-old daughter, said parents would rather have kept their children at the school and seen it turn around. "In the end they had no option. I don't think the local authority really did enough to help," she said.

Mrs Sheppard said one of the problems at the school had been the absence, through long-term sickness, of the head-teacher, Sheila Sturman.

A spokesman for Norfolk County Council said yesterday that councillors were due to meet to consider a number of options. "The situation at the moment is that the school remains officially open even though there are no teachers or pupils," he said. "Of course, closure of the school is an option."

Councillor John Holmes, chairman of the education committee, said the authority had provided advice and support to the school. He added: "The critical role in providing a suitable standard of education must rest at school level."

The Department of Education and Employment said it was awaiting a report from the local authority and was monitoring the situation.

Literacy targets for every local authority

Literacy targets for every local authority are expected to be announced today by Stephen Byers, schools standards minister. Some local authorities will have to double the proportion of their primary pupils reaching the expected standard in English under the plans, to be outlined at the north of England education conference.

Mr Byers will tell the Bradford conference of local authority representatives and education experts that every authority has agreed to challenging new targets to raise

standards by 2002. Ministers have said they want 80 per cent of 11-year-olds to achieve the expected standard in national tests in English within the next five years. The figure now is 56 per cent, and some local authorities who have just over 30 per cent of their pupils reaching the target must double that figure. The best-performing authorities will have to ensure that around 90 per cent of their pupils meet their targets.

Officials at the Department for Education and Employment suggested targets for each

authority last autumn. It is understood that all have now come up with figures acceptable to David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education.

Professor Michael Barber, a senior government adviser, told the conference yesterday that Britain was not yet in the premier league for literacy. In maths we came 25th in a recent international study. "These statistics provide powerful justification for the Government's vigorous attack on the tail of under-performance,"

Mr Byers will say today

that the Government's numeracy task force under Professor David Reynolds of Newcastle University will report before the end of the month. The Government will then set targets for all authorities. It wants 75 per cent of 11-year-olds to reach the expected standard by 2002.

Don Foster, the Liberal Democrats' education spokesman, told the conference that the education system needed a radical rethink. The Government, he said, should stop tinkering with a failing system and create

an inclusive education system to meet the needs of the next millennium. He said since so much was learnt between the ages of 0 and 3, we should treat the early years as a distinctive phase, the foundation stage.

There must be a fairer distribution of funding, he said. "We must question why we accept larger classes in primary than in secondary schools. If there is to be no extra money then we should consider real-locating it."

— Judith Judd
Education Editor

RAMADAN MUBARAK HAPPY RAMADAN



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BRISTOL
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Fish once
heart at

Eating fish once a week
can halve the risk of
dying suddenly from a
heart attack, according
to a new study. But how
reliable is the finding?
Jeremy Corbyn, Health
Editor, unravels a
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complex story

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Fish once a week may keep sudden heart attacks at bay, says study

Eating fish once a week can halve the risk of dying suddenly from a heart attack, according to a new study. But how reliable is the finding? Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor, unravels a complex story.

A study of 20,000 male American doctors suggests that fish may have a more dramatic effect on the heart than has been suspected. Those who ate fish of any kind at least once a week had a 52 per cent lower risk of sudden death from heart disease than those who ate it less than once a month.

But the finding is complicated by the apparent absence of any other protective effects of fish on the heart. There was no difference between the frequent fish eaters and the rest in terms of the number of heart attacks, deaths from heart disease or non-sudden cardiac deaths.

Oily fish—salmon, mackerel and others containing what are thought to be the most beneficial omega-3 fatty acids—had a protective effect against sudden death but it was not as great as that from overall fish consumption.

Christine Albert and colleagues from the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, say in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that 250,000 sudden heart deaths occur in the United States each year, more than half of which have no previous history of heart disease.

"All levels of fish consumption were associated with a decreased risk of sudden death, but the size of the reduction did not appear to differ substantially at levels of consumption greater than one fish serving per week, suggesting a threshold effect."

Doubts about the study are raised in an accompanying editorial by Daan Kromhout, of the National Institute of Pub-



Sliding scale: Those who eat fish once a week have a 52 per cent lower risk of sudden death. Photograph: Philip Meech

lic Health in the Netherlands. The findings conflict with other studies, which have shown protective effects against heart disease deaths but not against sudden cardiac deaths, and the number of doctors eating fish

less than once a month was very small, suggesting other characteristics could account for their higher risk of sudden death.

Dr Kromhout said evidence accumulated over 20 years showed clearly that non-fish

caters were at higher risk of dying of heart disease. Attention has focused on oily fish such as mackerel because it contains the highest levels of omega-3 fatty acids which are believed to be important in preventing the

ventricular fibrillation (heart flutter) that is thought to trigger heart attacks.

"The more unsaturated the fatty acids the stronger the effect. That is the hypothesis we are working on," Dr Kromhout said.

Pubs and restaurants break records for Christmas lunch

More people than ever this Christmas chose to desert the kitchen for the local pub or eatery. Anywhere from Harvester restaurants to local boozers were crammed full of customers for Christmas lunch this year. One Beefeater restaurant, the Rusty Cutter in Bed-

hampton, was even booked out for the meal by last April.

And it is not just Christmas—Britons are choosing to eat out in their droves on any special occasion. Pubs and restaurants are already reporting record book-

ings for Valentine's Day and Mothering Sunday.

"These are the best bookings we have ever seen for Christmas Day. Most people ordered the traditional lunch but there were plenty of alternative and vegetarian meals were also popular,"

said a spokesman for Bass Taverns, one of the biggest pub groups in the country. The story has been mirrored across the whole industry.

As working hours increase, more people have not got the time or are not prepared to spend hours in the kitchen. A recent survey found that it takes an average of five and a half hours to prepare a Sunday lunch. Pub operators also believe the rise in the divorce rate, which has led to an increase in the number of single parents,

leads people to turn to pubs and restaurants as an alternative to eating at home.

These trends mean that the eating-out market is expected to show double-digit growth over the next few years, they have also led to the transformation of the traditional pub. Gone are the soggy fish and chips and the stale pie. Most of the major chains have spruced up their menus and introduced a wider, more exotic range of food to cash in on the growing demand.

—Andrew Yates

No profit in meat for Tesco

Tesco said yesterday it was making next to no profit from selling meat. Britain's largest supermarket chain has been accused of squeezing hard-pressed producers' profits and then failing to pass on savings to customers.

Terry Leahy, Tesco's chief executive, said the store was actually lucky to balance its books in the butcher's department.

He announced the launch of an investigation into where money in the meat supply chain is going.

DAILY POEM

At the Emporium

by Helen Dunmore

He is the one you can count on
for yesterday's bread, rolling tobacco
and the staccato
tick of the blinds
on leathery Wednesday afternoons.
He has hand-chalked boards with the prices
of Anchor butter and British wine.
He doesn't hold with half-day closing.

He's the king of long afternoons
lounging vested in his downy
He watches the children dabble
and dawdle, licking ice-creams
that drip on the steps.
His would be the last face that saw them
before an abduction. Come in,
he is always open.

Our Daily Poems until Monday 19 January (when the winner will be announced) come from the 10 volumes shortlisted for the 1997 T S Eliot Prize, presented by the Poetry Book Society. All the authors will take part in a reading on Sunday 18 January at 7.30pm in the Almeida Theatre, London N1 (box office: 0171-359 4404). This poem comes from *Resilience* (Bloodaxe, £6.95). • Helen Dunmore

Hands up all those who want to cut out cigarettes.

People who've never smoked don't know how hard it is to break the habit. But those who've tried know and maybe we can help.

When you cut out smoking.

You're likely to experience irritability because your body misses the nicotine, but what's more, you may also miss actually holding the cigarette.

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Introducing the new Nicorette Inhalator.

The Nicorette Inhalator is not a smokeless cigarette. It is a unique new form of nicotine replacement therapy, comprising a mouthpiece and a replaceable nicotine cartridge. Simply draw on the mouthpiece and the cartridge releases just enough nicotine to relieve your craving. In the meantime, your hands are kept busy holding the Nicorette Inhalator.

What you don't get is the tar, carbon monoxide and smoke which are well known causes of cancer and heart disease. As you know, your body is already addicted to nicotine which is why the Nicorette Inhalator was developed to help you cope without cigarettes and, eventually, nicotine.



The evidence.

Using the Nicorette Inhalator has been clinically proven to double your chances of giving up, compared to willpower alone. The Nicorette range has been used by more people around the world than any other product to help them quit smoking.

Nicorette Inhalator, from your local pharmacy.

Once you've made the decision to do something about your smoking, we can help you take it one day at a time. If you smoke up to 20 cigarettes a day just ask your pharmacist for the Nicorette Inhalator. If you smoke more, there's a whole range of other Nicorette products to help you.

For more information, call Freephone 0800 2 GIVE UP (0800 2 44 83 87) or visit our website, (www.nicorette.co.uk) and you'll find we're ready, willing and able to help you cut out smoking.



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12/RUSSIA

Cunning patriarch propels Christianity to heart of state

Russia is celebrating Christmas Day today, led by Alexei II, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the last decade Alexei has seen his church restored to a powerful, even ruthless, force. As Phil Reeves reports, the patriarch is now one of the country's most influential and ambiguous figures.

Christmas was officially scrapped by the Communists who turned New Year into the main seasonal celebration, but it has been making a steady comeback since Boris Yeltsin restored its status as a national holiday several years ago. Such is its novelty that the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* yesterday published instructions on what to do. Although in Tsarist times prosperous Russians ate swan at the main meal, roast chicken or turkey would do, it advised.

Alexei II himself could be forgiven if he allowed himself a frisson of personal triumph today. When he was merely a humble bishop, his friends at the KGB gave him the codename "thrush". Were they today to choose a sobriquet for Alexei II, the patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, it would be a bird of far greater sinew. He and his organisation are as central in the new Russia as the tsarist era double-headed eagle that adorns the national flag.

Statistics suggest that half of Russians identify themselves as Orthodox, but active participation in the church remains low. Yet the church itself has forged forward in the last 10 years, dramatically increasing its prestige and winning back much of the ground lost by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Those aspiring to be a power



Bright flame: A Russian girl, watched by her grandmother, lights a candle for Christmas in Kazansky cathedral in St Petersburg yesterday Photograph: Alexander Demianchuk/Reuters

in the land - be they Boris Yeltsin, the Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, or themayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov - make it their business regularly to share a stage with the cleric. Few are better skilled than Alexei in the business of amassing power in a state in which cronyism, wealth and unreconstructed Sovietism play a

greater role than the instruments of democracy. He not only worked within the church when it was penetrated by the KGB and bound up with the Soviet state, he thrived under it. After training as engineer, he entered the church in his native Estonia and became a bishop at 32. It was in the same year - 1961 - that the

church, aided by the KGB, joined the World Council of Churches and proceeded to exploit the naive and foggy benevolence of its members by covertly pressing through the Soviet agenda.

The KGB liked Alexei because he was compliant, and showed few inconvenient symptoms of religious zeal. He rose swiftly, and within three years was the Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate - in charge of the money, and working closely with the regime. When the Soviet empire disintegrated, Alexei apologised for his career in an unusually candid interview with *Izvestia* newspaper: "Defending one thing, it was necessary to give some-

where else. Were there any other organisations, or any other people among those who had to take responsibility not only for themselves but for thousands of other fates, who were not compelled to act likewise?" He was protected by the fact that he was no different from the assorted party hacks and security men who inherited the

remnants of the Soviet Union. (Boris Yeltsin spent three decades in the Party.) His advocates continue to argue it was Hobson's Choice - either stand up against the system and be crushed, or work within its constraints in the hope, now realised, of piloting the church towards a better future. In the post-Soviet era, he has

continued to depend on his political cunning, tenacity and pragmatism. Tensions between the church's vociferous conservative elements and its moderates could easily have rent it in two.

The price of avoiding a bust-up has been considerable: last year, under pressure from the right, the Russian patriarch called off a meeting with the Pope, jettisoning an opportunity to end 1,000 years of rivalry and hostility. The conservatives had demonstrated their capacity for destructive xenophobia before, by responding furiously when Alexei made a conciliatory speech before a gathering of rabbis in New York in 1991. Anti-Semitism remains ingrained within the folds of the Russian cloth.

So, too, do several other murky secular impulses. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the state - anxious to use the church to consolidate its own power - gave the Orthodox Church tax breaks to import such worldly commodities as cigarettes, oil and alcohol.

As Russia's clerics today ponder the man whom they consider Christ's representative on earth, even his enemies will be bound to acknowledge that he has achieved something. The figures look good: there are now 18,000 parishes, compared to 6,900 a decade ago.

He fought hard and successfully to get Mr Yeltsin's signature on last year's draconian new law which protects the Russian Orthodox Church from competition from foreign proselytisers on Russian soil.

Although Alexei has said he believes in the separation of church and state, his stewardship has bound the two inexorably together. He has pressed ahead with a revival that has seen the church acquire banks, land, buildings, and political suitors galore. The plumage of this particular bird may not be very attractive, but he gets the job done.

Sonny Bo

David Morle

David Bairs

David Bairs

David Bairs

David Bairs

David Bairs

David Bairs

David Bairs

David Bairs

David Bairs

David Bairs

THE INDEPENDENT

£10 Conran lunch

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ON SUNDAY

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The Independent and Independent on Sunday in association with Terence Conran are delighted to offer readers the opportunity to enjoy lunch or early evening supper at six of London's top restaurants anyday throughout January and February for £10

From Monday January 5th until Saturday February 28th, 6 Conran Restaurants are exclusively offering readers of The Independent and Independent on Sunday a two course lunch or early evening supper for just £10. In addition, readers can take advantage of further special offers throughout the evening at a number of the restaurants, details of which we shall publish over the course of the promotion.

How to Book

To participate in the offer simply collect one token (tokens will be printed every day until Saturday February 28th) and then telephone the restaurant of your choice quoting the Independent offer. On your arrival at the restaurant you must present your token in order to qualify for the offer. Each token is valid for a complete table booking. The tokens will be valid for one week only, and will be dated accordingly. To continue to participate in the offer, simply collect a token from the week in which you wish to dine. Pre-booking is essential and all bookings are subject to availability.

A special discount is available on selected items in the Bluebird and Le Pont de la Tour shops on presentation of the token.

Terence Conran, widely recognised as the UK's leading restaurateur has played a significant role in changing the way we eat out. He has created 11 unique restaurants, and this year will open two more in London and one in Paris.

THE INDEPENDENT INDEPENDENT

Valid between Monday January 5th and Friday January 9th

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ZINC
BAR & GRILL



Bluebird: 350 King's Road, London, SW3 5UU. 0171 559 1000

Bluebird is an Epicurean experience for lovers of food and drink: a large restaurant and bar, together with a food market, chef shop, traiteur, café and luxurious dining club. Since opening last year, it has become a popular choice for those who want to enjoy good food and wine in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere. The menu combines the best classic and contemporary flavours and techniques, and readers can enjoy dishes from the grill, rotisserie and wood-fired oven. Lunch 12pm-3pm, Early evening supper 6pm-7pm.

Blue Print Café, The Design Museum, 28 Shad Thames, London, SE1 2YE. 0171 378 7031

Blue Print Café is a favourite destination for many in the city. Admired for its spectacular view, good food and relaxed atmosphere, the restaurant looks out over the Thames and Tower Bridge. Blue Print's food is simple and light, reflecting influences from around the globe and the menu changes frequently to take advantage of seasonal produce. New for 1998, Blue Print Café has introduced a set lunch menu which Independent readers can try at the special price of £10 for two courses. Also available early evening is a selection of great Spanish food and rustic wine for £10. Lunch 12noon-3pm, Early evening supper 6pm-7pm.

Le Pont de la Tour Bar & Grill: 36d Shad Thames, London, SE1 2YE. 0171 403 8403

The centrepiece of the Butler's Wharf Gastrodrome, Le Pont de la Tour overlooks the River Thames and is situated by one of the most famous bridges in the world - it's namesake, Tower Bridge. The entire complex includes an elegant restaurant, lively bar & grill and series of splendid shops. At the Bar & Grill, the menu is a mix of regional French, Irish, British and Italian dishes in simple, generous style. For Independent readers the chef has created a new set menu (£10 for two courses or £13.50 for three courses) full of classic Bar & Grill dishes. Lunch 12pm-3pm, Early evening supper 6pm-7pm.

Mezzo: 100 Wardour Street, London, W1V 3LE. 0171 314 4000.

"When we opened Mezzo in September 1995, we wanted to make people feel good, to add to the quality of life in London and to bring something completely different to Soho," says Terence Conran. Described as the largest restaurant in Europe, Mezzo is in fact a collection of complementary, food related activities all gathered together under one enormous roof: Soho's only bakery, a patisserie, café and four bars, as well as two different restaurants - Mezzo and Mezzonine. Mezzo is reached by an impressive staircase which winds down through a dramatic double height space where the kitchens create a spectacular stage. The food is a fusion of east meets west, northern and southern hemispheres, where chef John Thorpe shows his passion for mixing ingredients with flair and innovation. Lunch 12pm-3pm, Early evening supper 6pm-7pm.

Quaglino's, 16 Bury Street, St James's, London, SW1Y 6AL. 0171 930 6767

Celebrating its fifth birthday on February 14th this year, Quaglino's has been described as ".....the talk and taste of London, a place so polished and swanky it could only have come from Terence Conran." Vogue Entertaining Guide June/July 1993. Despite opening in the depths of the recession, this glamorous restaurant has been one of London's most successful establishments. Inspired by the great brasseries of Paris, the menu is predominantly a mix of British, French and Italian dishes. Lunch 12pm-3pm, Early evening supper 5.30pm-6.30pm.

Zinc Bar & Grill, 21 Heddon Street, just off Regent Street, London, W1R 7LE. Tel 0171 255 8899

Zinc Bar & Grill is a lively and informal restaurant and bar, in the heart of London's West End. Just seconds away from the hustle and bustle of Regent Street, Zinc Bar & Grill provides an oasis from the West End frenzy, a place to meet friends for a quick drink, a light lunch or a relaxed dinner. The menu is simple and reasonably priced with the majority of dishes cooked on the grill and rotisserie, on view to restaurant customers. Exclusively at Zinc, readers will be able to enjoy three courses for just £10 between 12 noon and 7pm.

*Closed from 6pm on Sunday

Terms and conditions: To participate in the offer simply telephone the restaurant of your choice direct (from those listed above) to make your table reservation, identifying yourself as an Independent diner. On arrival at the restaurant you should present your correctly dated token to qualify for the promotion. Tokens are only valid for the dates printed. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in the promotion. Pre-booking is essential and all bookings are subject to availability. Diners will not be able to participate in the promotion if they have not made a prior reservation. The offer entitles the Independent diner and all members of their booking to a two course lunch or early evening supper (pre 7pm) at Mezzo, Bluebird, Le Pont de la Tour Bar & Grill, Quaglino's, Blue Print Café or Zinc Bar & Grill for £10. Price includes one side order against a specially prepared menu. The discount at the Bluebird / Le Pont de la Tour shops applies to selected purchases in store. The menu may change from time to time during the course of the promotion. The cost of the meal includes VAT and excludes drinks, coffees/teas. A discretionary service charge of 12.5% will be added to each bill. The offer is exclusive to Independent readers and this offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer and is non-transferable. Conran Restaurants Ltd trading terms and conditions apply. Promoter: The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5AP.

صحن من الامل

Waxy Mao still draws the crowds

The 50-year-old woman from Inner Mongolia was not impressed. It was her fourth time paying her respects to Chairman Mao, her previous visits being in the 1980s. As she emerged from the mausoleum in Tiananmen Square yesterday, she explained: "It's not like the original one. The ears look dark. And, before, the face was fatter, now it's sunken in a bit. Also the complexion is not like natural skin."

Mr Li, a 63-year-old Peking party member who had visited Mao more than 10 times, disagreed: "They did not change anything with his body; it is preserved very well."

Mao Zedong's embalmed body was back on public display yesterday when his mausoleum reopened after nine months of renovations. To *The Independent*, the Chairman looked just as waxy and implausible as ever, like a Madame Tussaud's reject. Not that there was any opportunity for a proper inspection.

As before, the line of visitors was kept constantly moving by stern soldiers, 20 feet away from the glass-coffined body. In the gloomy orange light, the head and shoulders protruding from the hammer-and-sickle flag looked a distant descendant of flesh and blood.

The vast, square mausoleum, constructed in eight months after Mao died in September 1976, had received 110 million visits when it closed for renovations

on 1 April last year. One hour after re-opening yesterday morning, some 4,500 Chinese had already filed through.

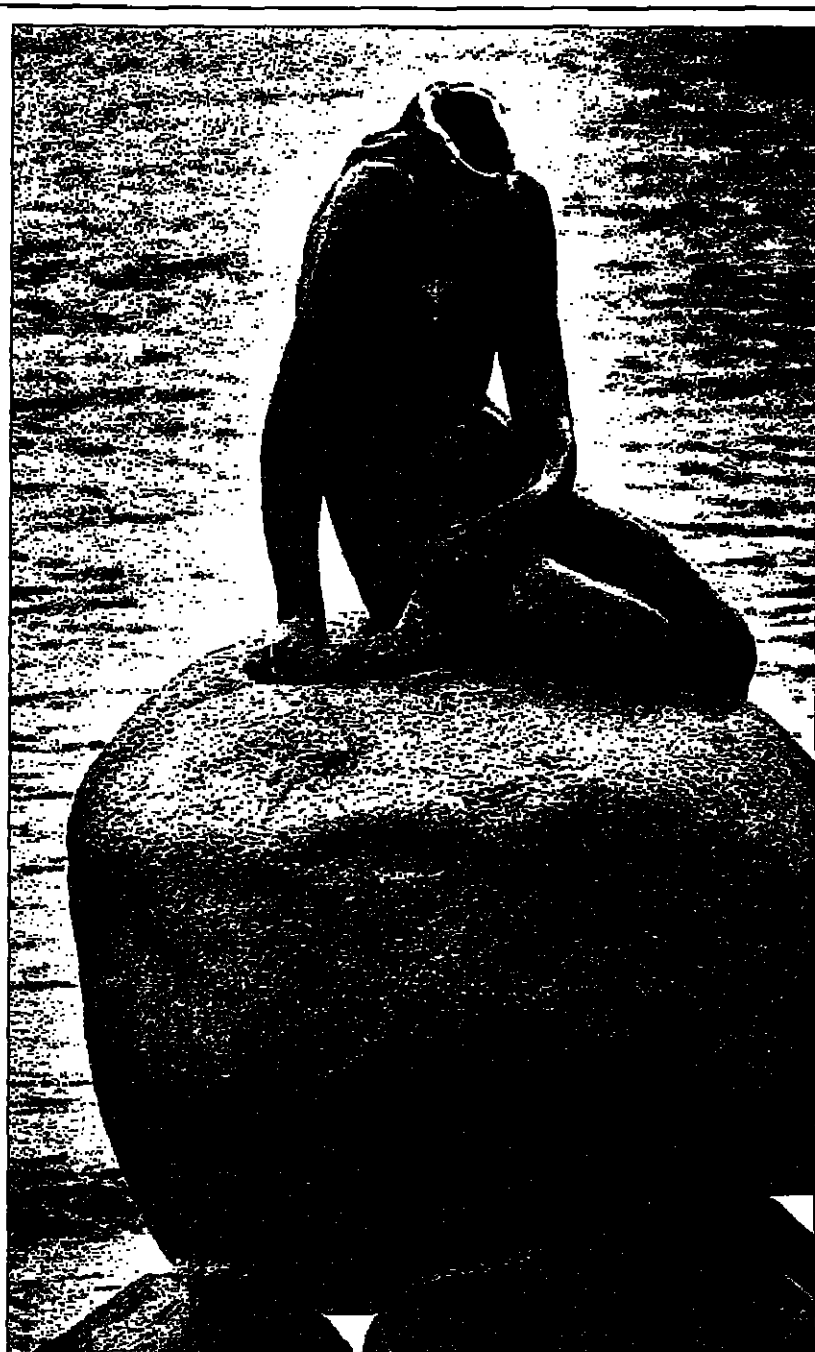
But it remains a mystery what the workmen have been doing. The body looked the same, and the walls seemed to have benefited only from a coat of paint.

One visitor suggested the air-conditioning systems had been overhauled. Perhaps the rumours had been true - that Mao, who had 22 litres of formaldehyde pumped into his corpse when he died - had been "leaking".

Mao's doctor, Li Zhisui, presented a vivid account of the original embalming in his memoirs, after the Politburo overruled Mao's wish for a cremation. "His skin was shiny and the formaldehyde oozed from his pores like perspiration," wrote Dr Li. The embalming took a year. "A tube inserted into Mao's neck would allow the team to replenish the formaldehyde at periodic intervals. The crystal coffin would be filled with helium," he added. No other Chinese leader has been embalmed; last year Deng Xiaoping's ashes were thrown into the sea.

Last September, Bao Ge, a Shanghai dissident, wrote a public letter to the government suggesting it was time Mao was cremated. But Mr Bao is now in exile - and Mr Mao is far too profitable to be given a decent burial.

— Teresa Poole, Peking



Little mermaid loses her head

The most famous mermaid in the world has lost her head for the second time.

The decapitation was reported before dawn yesterday by a passerby in the harbour park in Copenhagen, Denmark, where the statue perches on a rock.

As scuba divers searched the harbour waters for the missing head, police said they were looking for two young men who were seen rollerskating from the park and laughing at about the time the vandalism was reported. The police took the first decapitation in 1964 so seriously that it was investigated by the homicide squad, but no arrests were made.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, the East

London aquarium claimed to have captured a real mermaid. Local press promised she would go on show at the weekend and carried photographs of Tessa du Toit, a teenage aquarium guide, complete with fish tail and strategically placed clam shells, lying on the rocks in the penguin pool.

The stunt pulled in the crowds, but: "It all went wrong when people began asking Tessa to swim," said Willie Maritz, the aquarium curator, yesterday. "I said she cannot swim with that suit on, then people really lost it... jumping the barrier, shouting 'fraud' and pelting her with missiles. We had to call in the police."

— Mary Braid

Jobless protests strike at heart of French coalition

The spectre of high unemployment has caught up with France's Socialist-led coalition government. A nationwide campaign by militant, jobless groups has provoked widespread public sympathy - and open squabbles between ministers. A demonstration is planned in Paris today.

France has suffered high unemployment for 15 years but, until now, the unemployed themselves have remained mostly silent.

Demonstrations and sit-ins by militant groups representing the 1 million long-term unemployed have changed all that. Seventeen employment insurance offices around the country, one minister's constituency headquarters and several government offices in Paris remained occupied last night.

The campaign has struck Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's government at its most vulnerable and sensitive point: its unfulfilled promise to do something about the stubbornly high unemployment rate (12.3 per cent). The protesters' tactics and demands (including a steep increase in unemployment pay and a £300 Christmas bonus for the jobless) have produced public quarrels within the Socialist-Communist-Green coalition which has been running France since June. The deputy prime minister and employment minister, Martine Aubry, said the occupa-

tions were "illegal". The Green leader, Dominique Voynet, and the Communist leader, Robert Hue, described them as "understandable" and "legitimate".

The more moderate unions have accused the Communist-aligned CGT of fomenting the protests. Nicole Notat, leader of the CFDT union federation, who is also president of Unedec, the quango which runs unemployment insurance, said the protesters were politically-motivated "agitators" who were "manipulating the distress" of the real unemployed.

There is some evidence that the actions have been coordinated by the hard-line wing of the Communist Party, and the CGT.

But the three militant groups involved have attracted the support of genuinely unemployed people. Polls have also suggested that almost two thirds of the French people sympathise with the protesters.

A nationwide day of action, including a demonstration in Paris, has been called today to coincide with a meeting of Unedec. The agency is expected to make some form of conciliatory gesture but is unlikely to meet the protesters' demands, which would force an increase in the already steep insurance payments made by employers and those who do have work.

— John Lichfield, Paris

UK to revive Montserrat

Less than a fortnight after the biggest eruption so far in the current cycle of the Soufriere Hills volcano on Montserrat, a key British official insists that, if humanly possible, plans will go ahead to revive and redevelop the stricken Caribbean island.

"We need houses, houses and more houses," the official said yesterday. "We need low-interest mortgage schemes, and money to help small businessmen relocate" from Plymouth, the island's capital laid waste by a series of eruptions in the summer.

His remarks were intended to quell the continuing fears of many remaining Montserratians that Britain would declare the island unviable, and force them to leave their homeland for ever.

In fact a contingency plan Operation Exodus exists for the complete evacuation of the island should conditions become un-

tenable, but the British government's position is that "as long as the island is safe, we'll remain committed to you".

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, will visit the island next month to demonstrate that commitment.

Scientists now predict the volcano will probably remain active for the next two or three years, but that the northern third of Montserrat is safe.

But the 30 million cubic metres of ash and lava spewed forth by Soufriere Hills on Boxing Day has rendered the southern part, currently an exclusion zone into which entry is punishable with a \$250 (£156) fine or jail sentence, even more dangerous and uninhabitable.

Of the island's original 11,000 population, only 3,500 are left. Of these, 500 are living in temporary shelters, compared with 1,200 in October.

— Rupert Cornwell, Montserrat

Oprah on trial over 'mad cow' remarks Third of N Koreans face starvation

A trial opens in Texas today that pits the American talk-show star, Oprah Winfrey, against the might of the state's beef ranchers - over allegations about bovine spongiform encephalopathy. The ranchers claim that Ms Winfrey and a vegetarian activist who appeared on her show in 1996 unjustly defamed the quality of US beef and caused them millions of dollars in losses when stock prices fell. Texas is one of 13 states where disparaging the quality of food is a crime.

The charges relate to remarks made by Howard Lyman, director of a campaign launched by the Humane Society called Eating with Conscience, to the effect that in America thousands of cows died of unknown causes every year, were ground up and fed to other cows - the same conditions blamed for the BSE epidemic in Britain.

Ms Oprah responded: "It has just stopped me cold from eating another burger. I'm stopped." The suit accuses her and her team of failing to check their information; she argues that the show simply asked whether mad cow disease could happen in the US.

— Mary Dejevsky, Washington

The World Food Programme launched the biggest emergency operation in its 35-year history yesterday, appealing for more than \$378m (£236m) to feed nearly one-third of North Korea's population and avert a "humanitarian catastrophe".

"The international community has been very generous in the last year and we're calling on them to be even more generous to prevent the present food shortage from developing into a famine situation," said Catherine Bertini, executive director of the United Nations agency.

North Korea suffered extensive flooding in 1995 and 1996 which crippled agricultural production, and the country was hit by severe drought in the summer of 1997. Low rainfall reduced the expected maize harvest last year by more than half, and tidal waves from Typhoon Winnie in August damaged the rice crop, which fell far short of domestic needs.

No figures on famine deaths are available, but Ms Bertini said children have fared worst, with some showing signs of stunted physical and mental growth. — AP London

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As the hedgehog said to the fox, 'I'm not just a fabulous window-dresser, you know!'

Whether working at the ENO, the RSC or the London Palladium, Steven Pimlott is equally adept at putting the theatre back into opera or bringing out the music in a spoken line. No wonder he is most at home in musicals.

Not many people have a CV boasting productions of both *Carmen* and *Carmen Jones*. Throw in Mozart and Verdi, Sondheim and Andrew Lloyd Webber, and you're getting close to the diversity of director Steven Pimlott. And that's before you start on the plays. Ignoring his forthcoming musicals, *Dr Dolittle*, led by no less a figure than Phillip Schofield talking to the animals, and Cy Coleman's new *A Star Is Born* – not to mention a revival of his *La Bohème* at ENO in March – 1998 will also find him bringing his RSC staging of Tennessee Williams's *Camino Real* to the Barbican and directing world premieres by Robert Holman and Phyllis Nagy. This man is positively promiscuous.

The late Isaiah Berlin divided artists and individuals into two camps: hedgehogs and foxes. Dante, Ibsen and Proust are hedgehogs, pursuing a single universal organising principle; while Shakespeare, Molière and Joyce are foxes, seizing upon the essence of a wide variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves, rather than seeking to fit them into a unified inner vision. It's fair to say that the very nature of working on other people's plays means that few directors turn out to be hedgehogs, but Pimlott would appear to be foxier than most.

Or is he? True, his almost absurd workload means he'll hardly have a day off between now and next August, but having reached fortysomething, he's taking stock, stopping down the lens and focusing his vision. It all stems back to an incident a couple of years ago when he was working on his unusually fluid, updated *Bohème* at ENO. It happened at the "model showing", a standard opera house procedure where director and designer explain their vision to the company. "We were talking about why we were doing it like this and, at the end, the

répétiteur [vocal coach] – who shall remain nameless, may she rot in hell – said, 'Has it ever occurred to you that people might just come to listen to the music?' And you think, 'Oh, why bother?' But, you know, I'm not all that confident she wasn't right."

Were he part of the fashionable wave of theatre directors who have recently flirted with opera for the grandeur of its design and budgets, such a remark might be understandable, but coming from someone who trained at ENO in the early 1970s, it's downright peculiar. He warms to his theme. "It's a controversial thing to say, but I do think that opera is about the conductor, not the director."

BY DAVID BENEDICT

That's not to say there isn't a huge art in directing opera well. Indeed, I think the director's job is much harder than the conductor's because, on the whole, the music has fared better than the stage conventions in which the piece was written. Look at Verdi, for example. This really is controversial, but it's difficult not to see opera direction as glorious, brilliant, fabulous, interpretive window-dressing. That is not to deny that great opera directors don't get beyond that, but to get beyond that is so difficult."

Fighting talk. In the politest possible way, he's kicking against the cumbersome, unwieldy machinery of opera production that gives the director little or no say in casting (a process in the control of the music staff) and puts final rehearsals in the hands of the conductor.

"Frequently, your job is bringing the singer to baseline. Never mind directing, it's actually just about getting someone across the stage, to sit down or get a drink. Personally, I find life exciting in a rehearsal room with theatre people. But with opera, what is exciting is working with the designer and dreaming it all up in the model box; that's great fun. The reality is that it's rare that anything happens in an opera rehearsal room. I don't find that very interesting, therefore I don't think I do it terribly well."

In fact, he's equivocal about the whole business, especially in Europe, where he has just directed Verdi's *Macbeth*. "The publicity, the front covers, the front page-ness of it! One tends to think of it as a medium of sensuality rather than cerebral. Not in Germany. It's alarming, daunting."

He feels ambivalent too about the popularisation of Pavarotti singing "Nessun dorma" *et al* but equally unhappy with opera's bourgeois cachet. "All the opening-night nonsense of hair-dos and jewels has filtered to the surface with the recent Covent Garden stuff, the notion of opera as a gentlemen's club. And there's part of you that's bolshy and thinks, 'I don't want to be some fucking liveried servant providing you with entertainment between your smoked salmon and whatever.'"

His decision to turn his back on opera is balanced by his passion for that most popular of theatre forms, the musical. His earliest experiences of theatre came from acting out the Hollywood films of musicals like *The King and I*. Above and beyond the very direct emotional appeal of a musical's way with a story, he believes the thrill of directing them is quite distinct. "The people you work with, whether conductors or performers, are enormously expert. They are virtuosos. But the real charm of a musical is that, to a certain degree, it is right or wrong in a way that a play or an opera isn't. This is to oversimplify, but it makes its point or it doesn't. You cry at that moment or you don't, you laugh or you don't. It's not easier, but there's a clarity about the planning and the experience and an honesty and a vulgarity which I can relate to. It's difficult not to be hierarchical about one's achievements, but I am proud of the musicals. They are important and I don't have a problem saying so, and I slightly do with opera."

Pimlott's worldwide hit production of *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* in 1991 changed his life completely – his percentage means he need never work again – but it wasn't just financial. More surprisingly, the show's precision, control and theatricality led Phyllis Nagy to offer him her coolly poetic play *Butterfly Kiss*. In the first volume of her published plays, she describes it as her favourite production experience. He fol-



'Everybody else's rehearsal room is as secret as their sex life,' says Steven Pimlott. 'Even more so in a lot of cases'

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

lowed this exemplary, magnetic piece of direction with Nagy's thrillingly ambitious *The Strip* and is about to open her latest, *Never Land*, at the Royal Court. Tactfully refusing to name names, he alludes to letter-writers who leave the actors to flesh out texts which often have little to recommend them but their dialogue. "With Phyllis, the challenge for the actors is to go towards these people. Her plays are like classical texts. Everything is there in the material. I never know with her how much is sheer instinct and how much is head-work, but there's a fantastic sense of structure and playing with tradition. *Never Land*

is a three-act play, and a classical one at that. It unravels itself and the strands, the music of it... Musical metaphors really apply in her work – it is as if there are leitmotifs and rhythms. You have to hear her plays."

On a literal level, *Never Land* is startlingly topical, a passionate story about Europe and a French family who, against all the odds, yearn to become English. But beneath the dramatic struggle between personal choice and destiny, Pimlott discerns more. "I have found myself saying to the actors, 'This speech is a bit like Bach', and Phyllis has turned round and said, 'I was listening

to Bach when I wrote that.' Or I described the end of the first act as being like the end of Act 2 of *Figaro*. She said she was listening to that too. It's like the *Twilight Zone*," he laughs. He finds it hard, nevertheless, to discuss his own approach. "You never know how anybody else's rehearsal room is as secret as their sex life. Even more than their sex life in a lot of cases..." He admits to being quite instinctive, responding to the moment. "In the old days, I plotted and planned. Whether it's laziness in not doing homework or just somehow trusting the acting I don't know, but now

it seems to me that, before you can conduct the play, you have to have enabled the actors. They all have different ways of working, and you've got to get them firing on all cylinders so that they are being creative and making it their own. Then you can begin conducting."

The conducting analogy points to the unifying theme in his oeuvre. He concedes that, even in the plays, "music is always there for me". It reveals him as less of a fox and more a somewhat unlikely hedgehog. Certainly it is what makes him such a fine director of Nagy's highly patterned plays. He loves the "arias" for the three main characters, the "duets" in terms of the language, ideas sometimes linked through assonance and connections of sound. He speaks eloquently about the clarity of her vision.

"Her voice is her own. It's not someone harping on with only the voice of the author – that's boring – but beneath the delightful imaginative exploration of what it is like to be other human beings, there is the particular, idiosyncratic voice of the author. That's worth listening to, and rare. She's the real thing."

'Never Land' previews at the Royal Court at the Ambassadors, London WC2, from tomorrow (booking: 0171-563 5000)

...they see
...Bernard's not for
...have described as a
...plagiariser,
...happens to be the
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...think my clothes
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UPDATE



THE INDEPENDENT

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Was it the Martini speaking or had her father really lived his own version of 'Schindler's List'?

As Shauna Kanter's father lay dying, he muttered something about helping Brecht's family to escape. Years later, she found papers to suggest that this was more than just delirium. Now, she tells John Grace, she has turned her father's story into a play.

"I got Bertolt Brecht's kids out. They're alive and living in California. They're doctors." As deathbed confessions go, this one takes some beating. But since her father was prescribing himself large Martinis to go with the morphine provided by the doctors, Shauna Kanter just thought he was rambling about something else, and Ms Kanter thought no more about it.

Until five years ago, that is, when Kanter, a Jewish New Yorker, was 40. She needed some props for a play she was producing, and began rummaging through an old shoebox into which she had shoved some of her father's belongings after he had died. Inside she found an old passport. Leafing through it, she was surprised to find that her father's name had been misspelled and that there was a visa for him to bring his wife and two children back into the US; as far as Kanter knew, her father's first wife was an American, so no visa would have been necessary; besides

which, the couple had no children. To add to the confusion, his real wife, with the proper spelling, was listed under next of kin to be informed in case of death.

Further inspection revealed a missing photograph and a page heavily stamped with swastikas, showing that her father had entered Germany in 1939 via the circuitous route of England, Italy, Hungary, Turkey, the USSR and Poland. Since her father was a committed Communist, who had been imprisoned for his beliefs in the US some years earlier, it was highly unlikely he had visited Nazi Germany for a holiday. So, just what was he doing there?

Vague memories returned of her father telling her a bedtime story about being asked to help some German Jews, and Kanter began to wonder whether there might not be something in her father's dying words after all. It soon became clear that he couldn't have had anything to do with getting Brecht's family out – they left Germany in the early Thirties – but a conversation with one of her father's oldest friends made her realise that he must have helped to get someone out. "I found out that my father sometimes referred to his 'two kids in California' [Kanter's family had always lived on the East Coast] and that he had paid for two German kids to go through medical school," she says. And this intriguing mixture of facts, half-facts and sheer invention has become the subject of Kanter's latest play, *Legacy*.

Kanter herself isn't the easiest of people to spend time with. It's not that she's unfriendly – far from it – but her eyes tend to fix you and her body seems to radiate an intensity that makes it difficult to relax in her company. In short, she's that most unfashionable of creatures, a political animal. These days, now that we're in the happy-clappy New Labour era, no one is really expected to care too much about anything. But Kanter does care and, like her father before her, she doesn't mind showing it.

She trained as an actress in New York and scratched a living for 30 years before quitting a Broadway hit in mid-run 10 years ago. "It was a shitty but very successful murder mystery," she confides. "But the management was so cheap that it couldn't be bothered to rehearse new people coming into the show, and I found myself

self acting with strangers who had no idea where they were supposed to be on stage. So I gave two weeks' notice and left to become a writer-director."

Her first play, *Passing Through*, which premiered at the avant-garde New York theatre, La Mama, was about three Israeli and three Palestinian women and the possibilities of reconciliation; her second, *The Homecoming Project*, drew parallels between the Highland clearances and today's absentee Scottish landlords. Not exactly easy viewing, then. And *Legacy* follows in the same tradition, interspersing a 1940s narrative with modern-day stories of racism and oppression as told by schoolchildren; and if it seems to be a rather heavy-handed, not to say self-consciously Brechtian method of getting the message across at times, one has to admire the passion that drives it.

Unlike many of us in the Nineties who tend to see the Holocaust as a historical event, Kanter sees it as an ongoing experience that has still to be properly understood. Which isn't to say that she wasn't apprehensive about touring *Legacy* in Germany last summer. "I thought to myself: what right do I have to come and tell these people about their history?" she says. Yet she found there was a surprising willingness among young Germans to learn about the Holocaust. "Instead of being told about it by their teachers, they were keen to hear about it from Jews," she explains.

And Kanter found that, despite years of Holocaust education, many Germans still believed in a distorted truth: that it was only the rich Jews and the bad Jews who were sent away to the camps; that all the others left Germany of their own free will. The denial was so complete that many Hanoverian children were completely unaware of a Jewish cemetery just five minutes' walk from their school.

"Freedom from the past involves accepting the reality of what happened, and drawing a line under it," says Kanter. "Young Germans want to be able to take a pride in how much things have changed, but they can't as long as their history is kept so hazy." Yet she is no mere avenging angel out to rattle the Nazi skeleton in every German closet; she is as quick to point the finger at the Jews where necessary. "On our return, many English Jews simply didn't want to hear that we had a good time in Germany. They can't believe that the new generation has a chance to be different. They still hang on to my father's old tenets of 'Don't buy anything German, don't study the German language, and never spend your money in Germany.'"

Nor should one be too quick to label Kanter as just a Jewish political writer. Which is exactly what I was about to do after an hour's intense discussion of Jewish history. But as an afterthought I asked: "What's your next play going to be about?" "Ooh," she said, with unfeigned relief. "Something light. A comedy." Preconceptions. Isn't that one of the themes of *Legacy*?

'Legacy': Cockpit Theatre, London (0171-402 5081). To 7 Feb

صحنات الامل

They seek him here, they seek him there

... but Antonio Berardi's not for sale. Tamsin Blanchard talked to the man some have described as a misogynist and plagiariser, who also happens to be the most sought-after designer of the new generation.

He's rumoured to have been in talks with Donatella Versace. His name has been top of a whole host of design houses' hit lists all in search of a designer, from Givenchy, Balenciaga, Celine, Chloe and Lanvin in Paris to Iceberg, Cerruti, Etro and Sergio Rossi in Italy, not to mention the latest offer from TSE, the New York-based cashmere company. Oh, and John Lewis approached him with a deal to design a capsule collection for the department store. He was even recently rung by the fashion trade paper *Women's Wear Daily* to ask him if he had been approached by the House of Chanel before Karl Lagerfeld re-signed a contract for another five years. He's turned down more offers than you can count on two hands, not to mention the bungled British Fashion Awards title of Lloyd's Bank New Generation Designer for 1997. Antonio Berardi is a mere 26, less than four years out of Central Saint Martin's, and a name to be reckoned with - invited to dinner with

'I think my clothes empower women. They don't make them feel vulnerable, but powerful and sexy'

Madonna, no less - although, he says, he is still finding his feet.

The idea of taking on any old house, or a relatively new one for that matter, does not fill Berardi with ambition or excitement. He will happily design a collection - for a fee - and remain anonymous. But these days, whether he likes it or not, Mr Berardi is a commodity, a name synonymous with Cool Britannia that companies who lack their own credibility would give anything to buy into. No way, says the designer. The name, which he put in lights on the catwalk for his last show, is not for sale. Not for any amount. And to prove it, he also turned down a £20m manufacturing and licensing deal last year because the contract involved selling half his name.

One of the few contracts Berardi has signed is to consult on a line for the Italian leather manufacturer Ruffo. The deal is for two seasons and he is producing a new leather line for both men and women for the company to be called RR, Ruffo Research, unveiled this March at the Milan Fashion Week.

Despite the fact that he is still relatively inexperienced with his leather work, he has been hailed a master of the material by *Harper's Bazaar*, and his cut-out leather suits have become a signature as well as a best-seller. This spring, orders for his clothes have doubled from the world's most exclusive stores and boutiques, including Barney's in New York and A La Mode in London. For winter, the leather sold out within days of reaching the shops. "Those leather suits were so expensive," he admits, "yet there aren't any left." Berardi must be doing something right, and he's certainly learning quickly.

Berardi believes a woman should look like a woman. He is Italian, after all; born and bred in Lincolnshire, but Italian in blood and culture. For Spring, the Antonio Berardi look is "sexy, flirtatious, feminine; clothes that women look good in. My

philosophy is not about making a suit for you to go to work in. It's about making a woman look as sexy as possible, but within the constraints of reality." It may be a fantasy, he says, but then so, too, is a woman going into Next to buy a velvet dress for a New Year's party. "I think my clothes empower women. They don't make them feel vulnerable but powerful and sexy. I was called a misogynist because I did short skirts for spring," he says incredulously. But as long as there are women out there who want

to wear his clothes - and there are, ranging from a thirty-something Harley Street doctor who saw a suit in Liberty and had it made to measure for a mere £1,200, to Janet Jackson and Whitney Houston - Berardi is filling a gap in the market. You pay your money and you take your choice.

It has not all been roses for Berardi over the past 12 months. As well as being labelled a misogynist by fashion editors on the *New York Times*, *The Times* and *The Guardian*, he has been accused of plagiarising the work

of his mentor, John Galiano. "That comparison really annoys me," he says. "Yes, we have similar sensibilities and have similar backgrounds and upbringing. Lace and macramé are part of both our heritages. But my vision is totally different to John's. I'm a romantic but I'm a realist too."

Like Galiano, and indeed the majority of other designers, Berardi trawls vintage clothing shops in search of inspiration. Rather than looking for dresses to reproduce, he takes details and techniques from

old clothes like the basket weave ribbon work made into a ruffled and pleated sun dress for summer. Undoubtedly, the two designers share a streak of perfection and a passion for fine detail. And without Galiano's struggle and string of bankruptcies in London during the Eighties and his subsequent move to Paris and most recent elevation to high priest of French couture, Berardi acknowledges that he would not be in the position he is in today. Galiano paved the way for Alexander McQueen and between them

they have finally achieved recognition and acclaim for British designers.

Berardi is, however, still sceptical about the future of the British fashion industry. "How many times did John go bankrupt and no one cared? It took a French company to rescue him. It's sickening that there is still no one here willing to invest in British fashion. In Italy and France the government is proud of their fashion industries. If only the government realised it is a large industry and invested in it, we wouldn't need to think about 'defecting' to show abroad."

Along with every other big name in British fashion, from Paul Smith and Vivienne Westwood to Clements Ribeiro and Hussein Chalayan, Antonio Berardi's collections are manufactured (and financed) in Italy. The great underlying problem with the industry here is that there really isn't one in the sense of a manufacturing base and infrastructure. It's all ideas without anything to back them up, like having a car industry that comprised a few brilliant designers with only a few magic markers and no factories or raw materials.

"We have nothing left here, just Savile Row. The mills and factories have all gone," he says. Although he owes everything to the art school system that thrives in this country and the atmosphere that allows new talent to grow creatively, he is pessimistic about the future of London Fashion Week.

'It's sickening that there is no one here willing to invest in British fashion - we wouldn't need to "defect" to show abroad'

Unless there is more back-up to the industry rather than just a handful of innovative designers and a lot of hype, he predicts it will never grow and will just be a spurt of creative energy every 10 years: "There has to be a backlash against London. I don't particularly want to move, but in a few years' time, if the bottom drops out of London, I'd have no choice but to move to Milan." He spends every other week working there as it is.

If an Italian banker had not financed Berardi in the winter of 1996, it would all have been over for the designer. He was paying £492 to have a jacket made in England, without the cost of fabric. He was selling the jackets to Liberty for less than it was costing him to make. Not surprisingly, he had debts of £20,000. It is the familiar lament of British designers.

Fortunately for Berardi, the future looks rosy. He still lives on the breadline, ploughing any money he makes into paying bills and buying fabrics, and generally living beyond his means. But he also still has his name intact and he still has a dream. Which brings us back to Versace. As well as Valentino and Yves Saint Laurent, Berardi sees Versace as one of the few houses he would one day love to design for. That his chance to prove himself is imminent, he says, pure rumour, hot air and fashion gossip. "Nothing happened with Versace," he says simply. He met Donatella backstage after her first collection for the house since the death of her brother and she was complimentary about his work. Her elder brother Santo even posed for a photograph with the young designer. There was no job offer, but that is not to say Berardi has not fantasised about it. "I'd say don't pay me for a season. Sometimes it's about proving you can do something. You could be really clever with it... winking medusas, very tongue in cheek. Versace is very modern. It would be a celebration of Versace. I've had brilliant ideas..."



JANUARY 5 SCOTT



Antonio Berardi, above, is a stickler for couture techniques and detail. His new collection set to hit the shops in February includes basket weave ribbon work, vividly embroidered cashmere T-shirts, cut-out leather and delicate chiffon
Photographs: Chris Moore

UPDATE



Rupert Everett may star in Halston biopic

Fashion rumour has it that Rupert Everett, Hollywood's favourite juvie, has landed himself the role as Seventies disco designer Halston in a biopic of his life.

The movie would boast a star-studded cast as did Halston's own life. He was the designer responsible for putting Jackie Kennedy in pill box hats, as well as for dressing many of the revellers at the infamous club Studio 54, the subject of another forthcoming film.

Among his most devoted fans was Liza Minelli, who to this day will not part with her Halston designs.

The designer died in 1990 at the age of 57 after a life of fashion fabulousness, throwing parties for Bianca Jagger and

the rest of the "in" set of the Seventies.

Perhaps he will be able to re-use that ab fab line from *My Best Friend's Wedding*: "Love the shoes, love the hat, love the bag. Just love it."

The fashion world musical chairs continue as the *haute couture* shows in Paris loom at the end of the month. The latest position to be filled after months of speculation is the job of chief designer at French luxury goods house Celine.

The label is certainly ripe for a revamp and is part of the all-powerful conglomerate that put John Galiano and Alexander McQueen in their Paris hot seats at Dior and Givenchy.

This time, the job goes to an Ameri-

can. Michael Kors, a designer who specialises in easy-to-wear sportswear.

Meanwhile, there was speculation that Chanel was up for grabs because Kaiser Karl was getting a wee bit bored with ransacking Coco Chanel's archives four times a year. The rumour mongers had Yohji Yamamoto and Helmut Lang both already ensconced at the house. But it wouldn't be Chanel without Karl and he has signed his contract until 2002. By then, he'll be designing Chanel space suits, no doubt.

Pucci, that old psychedelic favourite, is going through something of a renaissance over in Florence. American designer Stephan Janson, who shows his own lux-

ury evening wear in Milan, has been hired by the family firm to travel the Pucci universe and revamp the label with a 50-piece collection of womenswear and a smaller offering for men to include loungewear, robes and ties.

Bargain of the week: one full-length lilac, satin-backed crêpe bias-cut evening dress by John Galiano spotted at Liberty's sale. Was £1,095. Sold yesterday to one eagle-eyed member of the *Independent's* fashion team for £99. OK, so it had a tear in the skirt, but with a reduction of almost £1,000, nothing that a bit of mending can't fix.

Tamsin Blanchard

Go on - think the unthinkable ...



Lynne Wallis: 'I had great fun, and my sexual confidence has returned' Photograph: John Voss

For some, the idea of a Lonely Hearts column is beyond the pale. But in the third part of our series on getting a grip on life, Lynne Wallis, thirty-something and far-too-single, discovers the secret of changing things for the better by changing the way you think

It all began in August when I threw a party for my 38th birthday. All my old muckers turned up and we had a wonderful time. The wine flowed, everyone danced, and there was laughter aplenty. But something was amiss. What the bloody hell was wrong? Eureka-like, it hit me. There was no one to flirt with. All my friends are single women, ex-boyfriends, couples, and gay men. There was no talent, trouser, totty, not a whiff of a Mr. Scrumptious-o-Gorgeous in sight. Never mind Mr Right, the single women at the party wanted Mr Right Now.

The inevitable question popped up: how on earth do you meet single men these days? Parties, work, through friends? When my women friends and I go out, we always make the fatal mistake of talking among ourselves all night, failing to scan the joint for eligible males. And although I work in an almost exclusively male environment, I wouldn't fancy any of the single ones, roasted, boiled or fried. Through friends? They're all married and desperate to fix Kevin the accountant up with someone. Where indeed.

And so it was that placing an advert in a lonely hearts column

struck me as a good idea. I'd browsed the ads a few times, who hasn't, but answering one always seemed so... desperate. At least placing my own ad would lend a bit more control. I left a telephone message describing myself, what I'm into, looking for, etc, which gets abbreviated into print form. Anyone interested in finding out more about me could dial a code to hear my message. Afterwards, I forgot all about it.

Two weeks later I remembered to call in for messages. I was stunned that 37 men had called. Hooray, there are some men left who want to date an outgoing feminist! I frantically began scribbling details onto my pad and blow me down, some of them sounded OK.

David, the first man I contacted, came over well on the phone: 39, divorced, a surveyor (ah well, not everyone lives their job) and he worked just round the corner from me. Whoopedoo! We arranged to meet after work. On my way to the tube, our meeting point, I felt like throwing up and running away. I looked around nervously. How on earth do you spot a tall brown-haired man with a dark suit on in this crowd? A gorgeous man with good teeth in a dark blue woollen suit looked over, and I was just about to wander up and introduce myself when David turned up, a dejected looking soul with bad teeth, a habit of licking his lips and a tick in one eye. He looked seedy, like someone who might visit strip clubs. I had to think on my feet. "Lovely to meet you," I managed. "I've got the most awful migraine and almost called to cancel, so I've turned up just for a quick drink," I said, holding my head in a pained fashion. His

wife had taken up with a younger man and was giving belly dancing lessons from their front room in Ruislip after she'd picked up some tips on holiday in Tunisia. I stayed until 7.45. Ah well, I did at least get some good advice on the structural problems in my flat.

I made a mental note only to meet for lunch in future, although the others were almost consigned to the scrap heap after my first miserable experience. But having already managed to meet Philip (38, fashion photographer, tall, into *This Life*) for lunch the following day, I couldn't very well bottle out. Someone I share an office with insisted I give him my mobile number, just in case my date turned out to be an axe

for my phone and he was convinced I'd been ravaged.

I started seeing Philip once or twice a week, but I couldn't bring myself to stop meeting the others. Philip said he hadn't banked on all this competition. "At what point do you decide, I'm not bothering to meet anyone else?" he asked, and I didn't know. I was growing more and more fond of Philip, but my love life had been such a desert for so long. I had to meet some of the others, at least the ones I'd contacted. It was like seeing all the sweets in the shop window and only being able to taste one. I was certain Philip's attraction to me was being enhanced by the competition - even the modernist of men like to chase a woman in

scription at home. Was he tall dark extrovert with glasses, or 5R 9in wine lover with a fair beard? I couldn't remember. So I went home after work to get it, to find my flatmate sprawled out on the carpet with beer and curry. I was jealous. I was desperate for a night in.

I told Brian I'd be in a light jacket with a small black rucksack on my back, but the blasted thing broke on the bus so I slung it over my shoulder. Also, it was raining, and mackintosh-clad, my description was no longer accurate. After all this effort, the only bloke on his own at Cwient Garden had a face that, how can I put it, only a mother could love. Surely that couldn't be "tall, athletic, friends-tell-me-I'm-attractive". Are they all blind, or what? I decided to leave when a besuited 30 something who'd been knocking back electric soup wandered over. Could this be Brian? The suit said "He'll never turn up. Why don't you come out with me?" Give me a break. The lone man on the corner was staring, but I left anyway, arriving home delighted to have a night free. "I've been stood up," I said. Not so, my flatmate informed me. Brian called from Covent Garden at 8.25. He must have had a pump-tin bypass. I didn't contact him.

After that, there was Nick, a human rights lawyer who looked like one of Botticelli's angels, and Sean, an Irish journalist I quite liked. I met Malcolm again a few times but I only really wanted Philip. When Malcolm tried to kiss me goodnight one evening, he complained as I stood there rigidly. "God, you don't have to kiss me you know. You look like you're being tortured", and I knew the game was up. I didn't fancy him. It looked like it was going to be me and Philip, but I was scared because I was beginning to feel he wasn't all he seemed.

demand. I continued my dating game but didn't tell him about it unless he asked.

I met a legal hack I'd been to school with, and a broadcast journalist who was so nervous he kept disappearing to the men's loo to wash his perspiring face. When he declared his favourite columnist was Auberger Waugh, I realised I could not date this man. I didn't have the heart to tell him face to face, and when he plucked up the courage to ask for a second date, I said I'd love to and had to put him off over the phone.

Fitting in all these dates with my regular social life was wearing me out, but I was getting a buzz out of it. And then I got my comeuppance. I was stood up. I'd arranged to meet Brian, another hack, but I'd left my scrap of paper with his de-

TAKING CONTROL

wielding maniac. If I wasn't back by 3pm, Pete would phone. "God Lynne, you don't have to do this do you. Look at you, you're an attractive woman. I don't understand it. Why would any decent bloke need to use an advert?" I started practising my migraine technique. I didn't need to.

Philip wasn't someone I fancied initially but he grew on me. He was rugged, tall, clever and witty, and we got on. He'd never used lonely hearts before, but the stigma is still such that most of the men I met said this. I got back from the tapes bar, glowing, and poor Pete was beside himself. I'd been in a basement restaurant with no signal

BELOVED AND BONK

Diary of a divorce



I have just come back from doing the most extravagant thing I have ever done. More extravagant than buying lots of smoked salmon in one go, or spending £75 on a pair of high heels that go with only one frock. I have been for a week in Tobago with Very Nice Chap, on the strength of having got a new job, and to launch us, post-divorce, into The Rest of our Lives.

The romantic Life Launch didn't get off to a great start, because going to lovely tropical places means starting out from their diametric opposites in south-east England: more specifically, a "night

before flight" B&B at the end of the runway. I'd imagined VNC arriving at the hotel to find me draped seductively in some sort of pearly-pink Jazzezi glow, with a tray of room service culinary delights on the pillow. (Sometimes my ability to believe in the improbable really worries me.) In reality, I had to blag a set of fairy lights off reception so that the lo-energy strip lighting in our dismal little cell didn't make VNC run for the bus and the Adelaide Blonde. And the only food available was sandwiches from a bar that Alan Partridge could call a spiritual home, where the staff were behaving as if the arrival of 100 advanced booked guests was a total surprise.

The greatest danger I saw in this all-too-typical tale of British catering was that I should reveal my dreadful fascist personality traits to VNC. He, being a totally balanced and internally peaceful individual, was unfazed by brown swirly carpets and cooking margarine in the sarnies. I, being a neurotic perfectionist, was ready to kill all the hotel staff with my bare hands. Luckily VNC persuaded me into a more sympathetic view, and we got to bed under the fairy-light glow without my having dragged the waiter across the table by his lapels.

Things didn't improve the next day, when we got to the check-in desk: our flight was overbooked, and for half-an-hour we stood around as people frowned and tutted over computer screens.

"Did we fancy going anywhere else?" the jolly airline official behind the desk quipped. I don't have a sense of humour under stress, so for a while I was in danger again of showing VNC what a truly ghastly individual I am. I went to the loo to avoid blowing an emotional blood vessel in a public place and by the time I came back all the frowns were gone and VNC was holding our boarding passes like a trophy.

All the same, I began to feel that our whole week was ill-fated: the plane would crash, or be hijacked to Moscow, where we'd die of hypothermia on the runway. Tobago would suffer the worst hurricane since Crusoe, or our hotel would be knee-deep in cockroaches and cholera.

I can't really tell you too much about how wrong I was, because in the middle of the first full week of a British January you'll just get jealous and nasty. We didn't crash, get hijacked or suffer hurricanes or cockroaches. But nor did we do replays of *From Here to Eternity* on the beach, or snog endlessly under the palm trees. We had a very busy week being a matching pair of little anoraks and pootling about the island naming things: plants in the rainforest, fishes on the reef. We drove through little villages teetering and cantilevered on to impossibly steep hillsides, where trees bloomed orange against the green of other wildly flourishing vegetation. All the people smiled, and all the dogs were

cute and wagged their tails. And it felt marvellously fresh, because although I've been to lots of other tropical places, I've never been with Beloved. So everything about this glorious extravaganza could be tied to VNC, to the future and not the past.

I revelled in the New Year and all it could be, whilst dancing with embarrassing abandon until very nearly dawn on 1 January. It all filled me with hope and the milk of human kindness. I came home feeling that I could make everything all right for everyone: I'd mould the kids, me and VNC into a family, make friends with Beloved and his Bonk and grow vegetables and sweet peas for everybody.

That lasted about as long as the fantasy about Hotel Runway. We came home to a house with no light or heat, in the hurricane that Crusoe sent from the Caribbean. There was a series of biology experiments in the fridge, and the picnic table was upside-down in the pond. The kids showed their desire for family life by jumping ship to a friend's house immediately. Beloved, it seemed, wanted me publicly flogged.

Only VNC stayed steady in the face of my fragile dreams. He lit a fire, and held my hand when I cried a bit as the past seeped back in. Then we planned our next escape to tropical heaven.

Stevie Morgan

Turning things around

During a crisis - domestic row, depression or serious work overload - there seems no way out. "I will never make this person understand... I'm a failure... This deadline is impossible." This is because anger or panic stop us thinking straight. Our minds only have so much working memory and messages from the emotional brain swamp the rational planning part. To get back in control you need a few minutes' calm. Then start to make your emotions work for you instead of being at their mercy. The trick is to notice there are two things going on - strong emotions and some pretty negative thoughts. In a row concentrate on the emotions, when you are depressed focus on the thoughts. Here's how to do it:

Make relationships work

How to have a pointless row:
1 Your partner really annoys you by telling totally inappropriate stories at dinner.
2 Once alone you explode: "You become such a ridiculous show off after a few drinks"

3 Your partner defends: "At least I'm amusing, the guy next to you looked like he was watching paint dry." And it all goes downhill from there, as you move onto old favourites like previous girlfriends, mother, the washing up.

Row with a purpose:

1 Starting point is the same - something annoys you.
2 Here's the big difference. Don't attack/criticise/blame, instead say how it made you feel - "I felt really embarrassed and silly when you told that story". This leaves no room for argument - you are the authority on your feelings - and it's more likely to trigger some apology than an attack.

3 So instead of getting bogged down in mutual slagging off, you can now move from your feelings to what you want to happen - certain topics off-limits, more signs of affection.

Now you are negotiating. Sometimes it's easy - "I didn't realise you got so anxious when I'm late, next time I'll phone." Often a bit of ordinary give-and-take does the trick - "I'll come to your mum's if you'll come to a club next week." If you are getting stuck, try reversing roles. That can be an eye-opener.

Look on the bright side

It's been a bad day - project fell through, you lost a sale. As you brood on it you start beating yourself up - "I should have checked... I always get panicked at the last minute." And the more you parade your failings, the worse you feel. Soon you are sliding down a negative spiral. Punishing thoughts make you feel worse, and the worse you feel the more your internal critic twists the knife. Nothing positive is going to

come out of this state. Change the way you feel. The link between thoughts and feelings works the other way too. To reverse the process, notice when you start spiralling down. Do this by keeping a negative diary. For a few days, just practice noticing your negative feelings and then summarise the thoughts that go with them - "Worried... I don't think I can handle this. Panicking... I'm going to bulls this up." A counsel for the defence: Once you can spot a spiral forming, you are halfway there.

1 Begin a positive diary and start to challenge your critic. "There is a lot of pressure, but I'd be bored stiff without it... It's no tougher than the project that went brilliantly last year."

2 Notice how words like - "ought, must, have to" fuel resentment and limit your options. Extremist words like "always, never" are easy to counter, they are invariably unfair.

You are not looking for a right way a seeing things - there isn't one - or one that is totally unrealistic - "I'm the best" - just one that makes you feel better and gives you more possibilities.

Manage your time

You never have enough time, right? You could have 50 per cent more just by organising yourself more effectively.

• What are trying to achieve? The key is to set out your goals. First in broad terms - write a book, move house, set up a new business - then break them down into short, mid and long term targets.

• Be clear about what you want to achieve each day. As well as attending to immediate tasks, always fit in some linked to the longer term. Make time for leisure.

• Handle interruptions. Set aside a time for phone calls. Limit visitors' times.

• Arrange your working environment so you know where everything is. Make the most of dead time.

• Know your abilities: set realistic deadlines. Learn to say no.

• Don't leave tasks unfinished, procrastinating makes for added stress. If a job is too big, break it into manageable parts. Be proactive, deal with problems quickly. Check that there isn't anything that regularly wastes your time.

Jerome Burne

Tomorrow: Family life v working life - and how one woman coped with an alcoholic nanny

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If Algeria cannot be helped, at least let the UN gather the facts



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The ghastliness in Algeria grows daily even ghastlier. The holy Islamic month of Ramadan is just 10 days old, but, according to the government-controlled local press, at least 700 – perhaps 1,000 – innocent civilians have already been slaughtered: burned, beheaded and disembowelled, as is the norm in this peculiarly sinister and horrible civil war between a military regime and an Islamic fundamentalist movement cheated of certain electoral victory in 1992. The revulsion and anguish are universal, but nowhere more deeply felt than in Europe, linked by history and geography to the lands of North Africa, which buys 90 per cent of Algeria's oil and depends on Algeria for one-fifth of its supplies of natural gas. Even France, which hitherto has bent over backwards not to offend the rulers of its former colony, has now criticised the government in Algiers and supports a German proposal for a European initiative to bring the blood-letting to an end. Something must be done, the world demands. The problem is, what? The answer would be easier were

Algeria in terminal collapse, and requiring international intervention to prevent mass starvation. That has not happened yet, and on balance is unlikely to happen. The country's rulers may be failing in the primary duty of a state, to ensure the physical safety of those within its borders. But unlike Bosnia or Somalia, where the UN intervened, Algeria remains a functioning state. Sixty-five thousand, 75,000, maybe 100,000 people (who knows?) may have died in the civil war. But it is solvent. Its economy is growing at 4 per cent, and the oil and gas fields that drive that growth are in the south and east, massively protected and far from the main killing fields in the hinterland of the capital, Algiers, and the west of the country. Indeed, in words almost obscene with paradox, the IMF just nine months ago was praising Algeria's "exemplary" efforts at (economic) reform. Clearly we are not dealing with a basket case, a "collapsed state" in the Somali or Bosnian sense.

Intervention, moreover, presupposes a reasonably clearly defined target. Here

again, Algeria fails the test. Yes, the population must be better protected – but from whom? This is a war of hideous complexities. Few can doubt the primary responsibility of the rebel fundamentalists; but the evidence is overwhelming that the security forces have committed some massacres. Throw in ancient, rekindled tribal hatreds, and the picture is murkier still. People die by the hundred every week, but at precisely whose hand? Is the aim to eradicate the guerrilla movement, to strengthen the counter-insurgency capability of the military, or to endow Algeria with a government that can reunite the country? Ultimately, only the third will end the conflict.

Set against this background, none of the possible remedies measures up. Some urge an international boycott of exports of Algeria's gas and oil, to "punish" the government for its documented human rights abuses against its citizens. But even if such sanctions were workable, the economic pain would fall largely upon ordinary citizens who have already suffered greatly. Gender

outside intervention carries separate risks. Arab countries, especially the two other Maghreb nations, would seem to be natural candidates – except that few Arab governments want the slightest truck with Islamic fundamentalism. Europe, and indeed the United Nations, have already seen offers of their services rebuffed more than once. To this week's criticism from Paris, the Algerian foreign ministry responded that the French authorities had no right to sermonise and make suggestions while Algeria itself was "acting to end the crisis". And so, once more, to the heart of the dilemma: the international community may plead and wring its hands – or rather, be accused of washing its hands. But how is it to intervene against the express wishes of a viable country that time and again since independence in 1962 has proved the prickliest and most uncompromising component of what was once known as the Third World?

One faint glimmer of hope remains. No more than a doctor can prescribe a cure

without knowing the nature of his patient's sickness, can the international community presume to recommend solutions for Algeria unless it possesses the facts. At the very least, therefore, outside observers, be they from the United Nations, the European Union or the Arab world, must be allowed into the country to gather information on the ground. And now, according to the spokesman of the US State Department, Algiers has signalled to Washington its willingness to discuss human rights abuses with UN emissaries. Perhaps nothing will come of it. But, just possibly, the gesture will provide an opening for the fact-gatherers; and upon their labours may be built a genuine third-party mediation. Every massacre makes a greater mockery of the claims of the Algerian government to be on the brink of winning a civil war that has cost almost as many lives as Bosnia. Only negotiation will provide a lasting settlement. We can but pray that that realisation will dawn upon the combatants, sooner rather than later.

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LETTERS

Britain in Europe

Sir: Lord Howe and his colleagues (letter, 5 January) assert that if Britain is not to be marginalised in Europe, this will depend "more than anything else" on safeguarding our right to enter a single currency "at any time".

This is tantamount to joining a European Monetary Union on any terms and without any regard for the democratic form of a unified Europe. If, as I strongly believe, Britain is to play her full part in a unified Europe, the first step should be to replace the non-elected European Commission's role with a European civil service fully under the control of a reformed and sovereign European Parliament.

Membership of EMU (with its implied loss of control over UK interest rates and its central gold reserves and with increasing constraints on Budget policy) is tantamount to passing over sovereignty to a non-elected European Commission in Brussels and a non-elected European Central Bank in Frankfurt, before the limited powers of the European Parliament have been strengthened. Is this the price Lord Howe and his colleagues wish to pay? Once again we are being asked to put the economic or financial cart before the political horse. Economic and monetary union should be the last step in unifying Europe, not the first.

WILLIAM M CLARKE
London SE10

Sir: There is a deeper significance in the striking letter from Lord Howe, Chris Patten and others, namely how on earth William Hague's Conservative Party can now continue to sit with the Christian Democrats of the European Peoples' Party (EPP) in the European Parliament, or present a serious platform at the next European elections.

EPP member parties have never been particularly happy with their alliance with the Conservative Party, partly because of Tory Euro-scepticism but mostly because of a perceived lack of Tory commitment to social solidarity. Third World development and corporate responsibility, Chris Patten's track record as a liberal Tory, able Minister for Overseas Development and now, one assumes, the beneficiary of insights garnered from the entrepreneurial genius of "Greater China"

puts him at the forefront of Britain's "Christian Democratic" coalition, which is much more than a Tory affair.

Such a coalition would be wealthier and more rooted than the SDP could have dreamt of in 1981. Under PR for Europe, or in referendum-like mayoral elections fought on local issues, it could do well. Given its existence no real Conservative voter or European Christian Democrat politician need ever bother with Hague's "militant tendency" again.

FRANCIS DAVIS
Church Crookham, Hampshire

Sir: Lord Howe and his co-signatories mention in glowing terms the main activities of the European Union. They also commend to us economic and monetary union.

It is inconceivable that a letter of this sort could have been written by politicians of equivalent standing on the other side of the Channel. Everywhere, at all times, and especially on an-

niversaries such as this, continental politicians lay great stress on the ideals of the EU's founders and the onward march of their own nation, together with other member states, towards political union.

Twenty-five years ago, Edward Heath dared not raise such an aim to the masthead of his accession venture. And today, Lord Howe and his friends have also exercised discretion on this point. When addressing their own electorate, it is not prudent for British politicians – no matter how Europhile – to highlight the central aim of the EU. On the Continent, all those who support economic and monetary union openly declare that they do so because it will lead to closer political union. Britain cannot remain silent on this point and aspire to be at the heart of Europe.

ANTHONY CLARK
Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire

Sir: I trust that Mr Hague, when he considers the "grandees" let-

ter on EMU will remember that the last election result was not a vote for EMU and its ramifications.

It was a vote against a patrician Conservative regime grown insufferably arrogant, and contemptuous of the electorate, a regime well represented among the signatories of the letter: the people who gave us ERM.

M J KNIGHT
Slough, Berkshire

Bad debts

Sir: It is not Diane Coyle who has forgotten that, during the Eighties, more than a half of the Third World's debts owed to the commercial banks were written off as losses; it is Nigel Wilkins (letter, 2 January) who has forgotten that these write-offs were purely in the banks' books, in recognition of the fact that they probably were not going to get the money back; they did not preclude any diminution of the vigour with which debtor

countries would be pursued for repayment. In any case, the most highly indebted countries (in terms of debt as a percentage of GDP) – the ones in sub-Saharan Africa – owed other governments and the international financial institutions (such as the IMF), not the commercial banks. They still do.

As soon as the world banking system was safe, the IMF lost interest in the debt crisis.

BILL LINTON
London N13

Classic car dilemma

Sir: The Government is to implement the European Commission proposal to ban the sale of leaded four-star petrol from 2001. This will adversely affect all of us who have older or classic cars.

Most cars made before the 1990s will be unable to run on unleaded fuel. The lead additive provides a protective coating for exhaust valves and valve

seats. Without it, heat and impact damage to the cylinder head will eventually destroy an engine.

As yet there are no approved lead substitutes on the market. Existing engines may be adapted by fitting hardened valves, valve guides and valve seats – at a cost. A Rover B series engine, as used in MGs, will cost in excess of £400 to modify.

Petrol stations will be able to sell a limited amount of four-star petrol – 0.5 per cent of total sales. Many petrol stations will find it uneconomical to continue to sell leaded fuel and those that do will be able to charge a "monopoly" price.

Replacing an existing vehicle with a new one is more damaging to the environment than allowing it to continue to run on leaded fuel. Should this ban go ahead then we old/classic motorists should be compensated.

DAVID ROOTS
Bath

Nordic humour

Sir: Miles Kingston (30 December) tells us that every New Year's Eve in Germany they show the same film on television, *Dinner for One, James*.

We do the same in Norway and in Sweden. To us Norwegians, it is not really Christmas until we have watched *Dinner for One, James* every "Little Christmas Eve", 23 December. The Swedes, like the Germans, show the film every New Year's Eve at 10pm.

There are no reasonable explanations for it.

TERJE VALESTRAND
Oslo, Norway

The 1000 bug

Sir: Is anything known about how the previous millennium was celebrated? Did King Aethelred II (968-1016) run into difficulties with his preparations, hence his nickname "The Unready"?

JOHN CANNELL
Bedford

Role for the old

Sir: Ken Jackson ("Welfare Reform? We really don't have any choice", 2 January) is right. Our long-standing link with the Muslim community of Gambia provides us with a cruel mirror in which to reflect on our own society.

In their society Islam and the extended family are central to the social structure and the elderly are treated with more respect the older they become. Our Gambian friends are outraged, morally and religiously, when we take them to visit our local residential homes for the elderly and they see the walls lined with "redundant" people.

"Why aren't they living with their families and being allowed to continue to make a contribution to society?" they say.

Rather than seeing the elderly as a problem let us see them as a resource. Is there really some biological change that takes place at 60? As a GP I will guarantee that appropriate, valued, paid work by the elderly will reduce and certainly delay the level of sickness and dependency and thus cost to the state.

DR NICK MAURICE
Marlborough, Wiltshire

Ottoman 'freedom'

Sir: Sinan Akinel (letter, 30 December) asks us to remember the "degree of tolerance and religious freedom that existed within the Ottoman Empire", adding that "things ... started to go wrong in the Balkans towards the end of the 19th century".

He might care to reflect on the decree of Sultan Omar II. In the period before 1878, this formed the basis of Ottoman rule, imposed in Bosnia over a mainly Orthodox Christian populace. The decrees concerned "Christians and Jews" and imposed 23 restrictions, among which it was decreed that Christians and Jews "Are not permitted to build their own cloisters and churches" (1); "Are forbidden to ride a horse with a saddle" (13); "Are forbidden to have crosses or Bibles in public" (18); "Within a house may sing only softly" (20); "Are permitted to pray softly when someone dies" (21).

It would appear that in this region at least, any tolerance that existed was on the part of the Empire's Christian and Jewish subjects.

PETRIA HOLMES
London SW3

Camilla, Mo and Tiggy, yes – Dipsy, Winky and Laa Laa, no. Women in the news in '97



MILES KINGSTON

Yesterday I brought you the Top 10 boys' names of 1997, as featured in headlines and news stories, and today I bring you the top 10 girls' names tabulated from the same source.

The top boys' name being Dodi, you will be hardly surprised to learn that the outright winner in the girls' section was Diana. This was always popular in previous years but had its appeal diluted because the name came in various forms – sometimes as Princess Diana, sometimes Di, very often "poor Di". I was always struck, too, by learning that in France she was known as "Lady Di", pronounced "Lah Dee Dee". I hope this was true. But last year for some reason the name always appeared in

the basic form, "Diana", and indeed it continued to appear so after her death.

Yes, after her death. It was always said that a magazine with the name Diana on the front would cause sales to jump, but I had not expected this to be posthumous as well. Yet I noticed that the big "story" on the front of the Yuletide edition of *Hello!* magazine was this: "Our first Christmas without Diana".

Never mind that none of us had ever spent Christmas with Diana, never mind that none of us had ever given her a moment's thought at Christmas, and that she had never gone on TV to give us a Christmas broadcast – here was a magazine that was prepared to bet

that they could sell extra copies by bringing us news of someone no longer here. Brilliant. I wish I had thought of it.

Some girls' names which were very popular last year have gone right down the popularity ratings. Virginia, for instance, and Norma. There was a time when both of these were fluttering through the headlines almost daily, but now they have gone entirely, being replaced by a new set of political girls' names (see Mo and Harriet in the Top 10 list). Evita and Madonna both bobbed up and down in the lower twenties without making a comeback, though Winnie did well to climb back into the Top 10. Oddly enough, I think this

is the first time we have had two girls' names in the Top 10 which belong to murderers, either alleged, as in Winnie's case, or actual, as with Myra. Three, if you count Louise.

The overall picture has been clouded by the arrival of the Spice Girls, a bunch of healthy-looking young persons whose personal talents were unclear, and the same might be said of the Teletubbies. No one individual stood out in either group, so their names must be judged as being equally popular, and I have treated their names as co-equal. What made it even more difficult was that the Spice Girls elected to have second names such as Sporty Spice and Rough Spice and Mince Spice, and heaven

knows what else, so I have decided to ignore those altogether.

Here we go, then, with the Top 10 girls' names for 1997 as drawn from the headlines. Previous year's position given in brackets. A roll of drums, please. Thank you.

1. Diana.....(1)
2. Louise.....(-)
3. Camilla.....(4)
4. Winnie.....(-)
5. Harriet.....(-)
6. Mo.....(-)
7. Tiggy.....(9)
8. Fergie.....(3)
9. Myra.....(-)
10. Emma, Victoria, Mel B, Mel C, Geri, etc

The unusual presence in the

list of the name Louise is almost entirely due to a famous murder trial in America, just as the name Rosemary had had such a high profile the year before for the same reason. It is interesting to note that everyone remembers the name of the (supposed) murderer but no one remembers the name of the victim. What was the name of the boy supposedly killed by Louise? Or the girl who was killed by OJ Simpson, or, according to another court, not killed by OJ Simpson? What, indeed? And that is why I advise everyone who intends to be involved in a murder to be the perpetrator rather than the victim.

Other girls' names which made a brave showing were

Hilary, Chelsea, Paula, Bjork, Tamara, Anthea, Ulrika, Jennifer and Clarissa. Well done, whoever you are. Finally, I must record that I made a unilateral decision to exclude the Teletubbies' names from this poll, not because their names are so unusual (for the record, their names are Dipsy, Tinky Winky, Laa Laa and Po) but because I cannot make out which gender they are and therefore whether they are boys' or girls' names. My daughter informs me that one of them has a handbag and is referred to by the others as "him". If this is so, I feel justified in opening a third category called Sexless Names and they are welcome to win it any time they want.

The dawning of the age of the Anglo-Saxon



**HAMISH
McRAE**
ON ECONOMIC
EUPHORIA

We Anglo-Saxons have our tails up at the moment, don't we? The strongest-performing economies in the world have for several years been the US and the UK, but also Canada and Australia. The success story is reflected in currencies, for the US dollar is at its highest level since 1992 against the yen and sterling is back in its 1992 ERM range. Money is flooding into the dollar and sterling as "safe havens" in an otherwise uncertain world. By contrast the East Asian boom has collapsed, Japan is shuddering back towards recession and most of continental Europe is struggling with double-digit unemployment and the social strains that result from that.

Along with this superior economic performance has come a dominance of Anglo-Saxon economic ideology. A couple of years ago British think-tanks were praising "Asian values" and some British commentators were even lamenting the fact that our financial system was not more like the German or Japanese models. Now the smaller Asian economies are queuing up at the IMF for loans, Japan is about to imitate the City's Big Bang, taking it as a model for reform of its own financial system, and Germany and France are busily privatising their telecommunications networks.

Beware, my friends, beware. All the above is perfectly true and there is no reason why we should not enjoy our moment in the sun. But anyone who recalls what happened to the East Asian triumphalism of a year ago, or the German euphoria of 1990, should pause and ponder. Could Anglo-Saxon triumphalism prove just as ephemeral?

The answer comes in two parts; first, the underlying reasons for Anglo-Saxon superior performance; and second, the extent to which these seem likely to persist in the first couple of decades of the next century.

Part of the superior performance undoubtedly is cyclical. Both the US and the UK economies are running close to full capacity, whereas the continental European economies and Japan are not. You can see this most clearly in the unemployment figures, where the level in the US and UK is less than half that of Germany, France and Italy. You can also see the signs of strain in the US balance of payments, moving into even deeper deficit; and though the UK payments are just in surplus, a move into deficit this year is widely expected. By contrast, in continental Europe only Germany is in current account deficit while Japan is producing an enormous and rising surplus.

But not all this out-performance is cyclical. For a start it may be easier to increase capacity in the new service economy than it was in the old manufacturing one. For example, it is very easy to produce more copies of computer software; it is much harder to build a new car factory. In any case much

of the supposed excess capacity of some economies may be unwanted. You certainly do not want new car factories: only yesterday Alex Trotman, head of Ford in America, said that there was 40 per cent over-capacity worldwide in car production and some of the greatest over-capacity was in Europe.

More importantly, the advantage that the US and UK seem to have achieved may be the result of structural changes that the rest of the world has yet to push through with the same vigour. These include acceptance of rapid downsizing of manufacturing, the costs (for of course they exist) of a flexible job market and the fostering of a culture of entrepreneurship. We will, of course, retain the advantage of the English language, enormously important in the media industries.

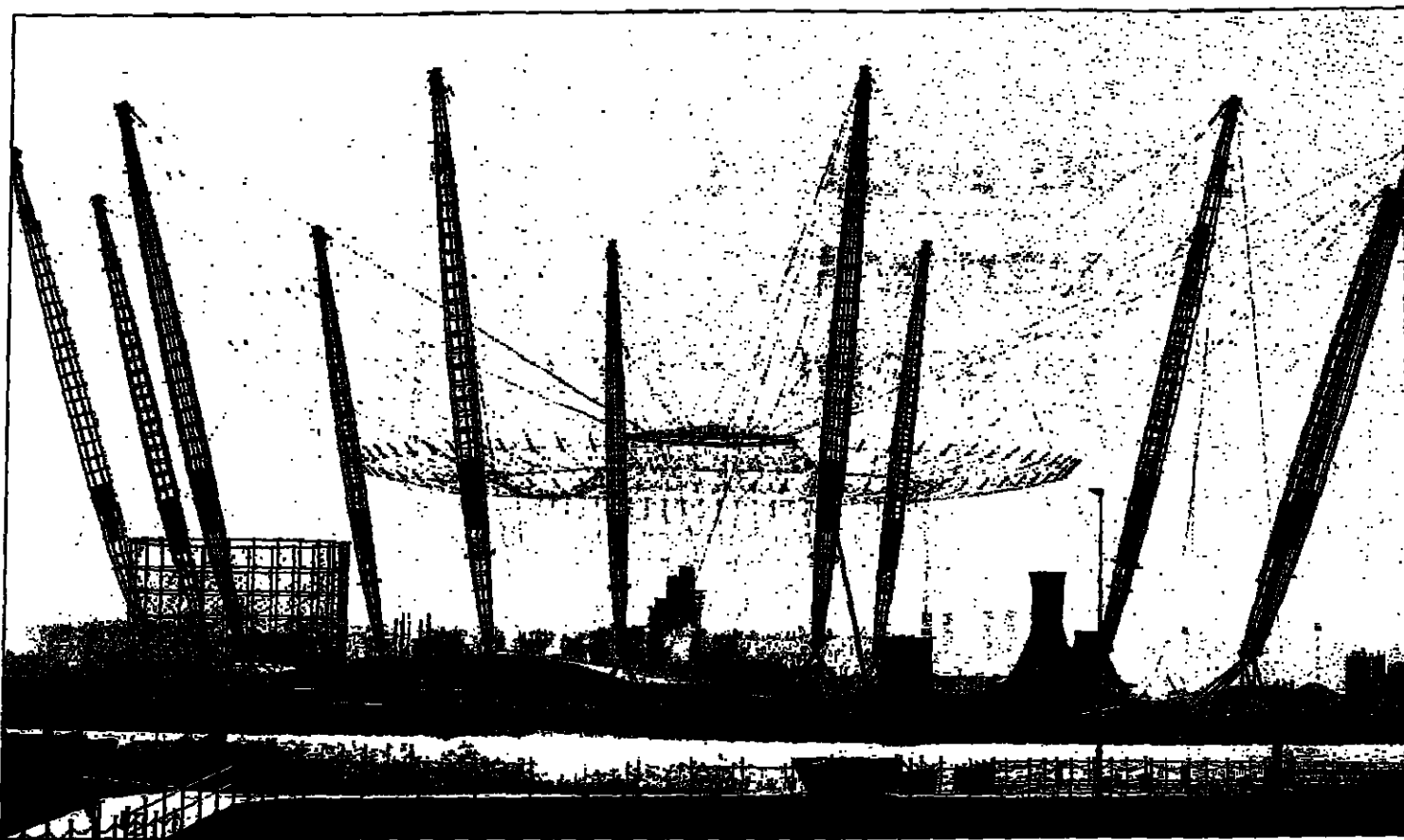
To what extent will this dominance last? Obviously there will at some stage in the next five years be some cyclical reversal. At some stage France and Germany are bound to grow faster than the UK, even though they haven't since 1992. The switch in fortune may even come this year, though I suspect that it is more likely in 1999.

In addition, we should be aware when we crow about the supposed advantages of the Anglo-Saxon system that features of it can quickly be adapted and applied elsewhere. The greater our intellectual victory in exporting our ideas, the more we narrow any comparative advantage we may have secured. Finally, we need to be aware that while on the measures of growth and unemployment the US and UK may look good, on some other measures (balance of payments in the US, general productivity in the UK) our performance remains relatively poor.

Looking ahead, there are certainly some reasons to expect the US and the UK to carry on their robust performance for the next couple of decades. One has nothing to do with economic ideology or even economic competence: it has to do with demography. Taking the proportion of the population over the age of 65 as a yardstick, the US becomes the youngest of the Group of Seven nations by 2020, while the UK is the second youngest; Japan is the oldest, followed by Germany. The whole developed world will have a struggle to support its growing army of elderly people, but it will be more manageable in the Anglo-Saxon economies than elsewhere.

I think too that the lead that the US in particular has established in entertainment, communications and software – the great growth industries of the next two decades – will be very hard to pull back. Result: the US will dominate these industries for a generation, maybe longer. The UK will be modestly successful, but mainly as a subcontractor to the US. We are lucky that we too speak English.

So will the current Anglo-Saxon euphoria last rather longer than its East Asian and German equivalents? I think it might, but it will become more muted. It certainly ought to become more muted. We should not underestimate the ability of continental Europe and of Japan to learn from us, just as we have learnt and are still learning from them. Nor should we underestimate the weaknesses of the Anglo-Saxon system, the fact that markets make mistakes, give wrong signals, get carried away with their own enthusiasms. And we should be aware that though the East Asian region will have a difficult two or three years of adjustment ahead of it, it does remain the most vibrant part of the world economy. Let's enjoy our present relative success but let's also be aware that it will only continue if we are cautious and modest. There is a lot of luck in economic success, and for once this luck has come our way. We are still wholly capable of making a mess of things; we have done that before.



Construction of the Millennium Dome proceeds apace, as do the disputes about its contents

Photograph: Brian Harris

True confessions of a social outcast



**ANDREW
MARR**
COMES OUT
FOR THE DOME

It is time to come out. Whether the cause is some buried trauma in my upbringing, or genetic, or simply a failure of judgement, I do not know. But there is nothing that can be done, except to admit it. I am a member of the most reviled and outcast minority on these islands, barred through the streets, silently pelted by generous-minded relatives and the object of sniggering derision at parties.

Yes, all things considered, I am rather in favour of the Millennium Dome.

There. Feeling better already. Better out than in. I should add that I am not paid by the Government to say this, that Peter Mandelson has nothing on me, that I am seeking no official role, job or emolument, and am writing – it being 10am on a crisp, bright morning – in as near as I ever get to a state of cold sobriety.

The Dome is so hated, by so many decent and intelligent people, and has accumulated so few friends and so many hard questions, that to be on its side puts me in a tiny minority. Drug-pushers are more numerous and popular than Dome

enthusiasts. So are urban druids. So, probably, are drug-pushing druids.

The Dome is so unpopular that it has become an all-purpose trump card for anyone criticising official folly. You are angry about the Government's attitude to single parents? Well, why couldn't they use the money they're wasting on the Dome, instead? Tony Blair's getting above himself? You bet. Look at the Dome, a monument to hype.

On it goes. Modern architecture stinks? That spaceship Dome. Hate pollution? That plastic Dome. Britain's got delusions of world grandeur? That pompous Dome. Whitehall is still too closed a culture? That secretive Dome. The British aren't serious about high culture? That theme-park Dome. The south gets it all? That London Dome. We are a short-termist country? That temporary Dome.

Even as its skeletal structure rises, with wires and cranes and earthmovers, it seems as though the Millennium Dome is becoming a kind of malign psychic magnet, attracting the nation's bile, discontent and suspicion of change to a small kink in the lower Thames. That may count as a perverse achievement in itself; just as the anti-Blairite conspiracy theorists in the Labour Party blame everything on Peter Mandelson, so the rest of the country blames everything on his Dome. Can it be long before William Hague and Ken Livingstone are marching, arms linked, through Shadwell at the head of a huge, soaking throng of ruralists and homeless teenagers, bellowing "dump the Dome"?

And of course, the Dome could be a failure. It could be too difficult to get to for the millions of expected visitors, or too

expensive to lure them in the first place. It could feel banal. It could look amateurish compared with the slick "are we all having fun now?" packaging of commercially-run theme parks. Lots of things could go wrong, ranging from the truly disastrous to the frankly hilarious, to Peter Mandelson's Dome.

Except, of course, that it isn't Peter Mandelson's Dome, or Richard Rogers's Dome, or Tony Blair's Dome. It is our Dome, paid for with our money as the centrepiece of our celebration of an event which, despite all the quirks of history and arguments about dating, is nevertheless a landmark in human time which won't come around again for a while. The Dome is going to happen. If you'd prefer, instead, a 1,000-ft alabaster statue of Shelley, or a free CD-Rom for every European child, or the pedestrianisation of Wales, then I'm afraid it's too late.

Nor will the Dome cost a ridiculous amount of money; indeed, it may make money. It hasn't twisted spending priorities overall. Had it not existed, the same Labour policies on welfare and education would have been implemented; there would have been no extra pot of gold. As it happens, the project has survived Michael Heseltine's forlorn attempt to keep it private; and a change of government; and is running on time.

The hostility may be huge. But, according to Simon Jenkins, the columnist who is also on the Millennium Commission, public derision was even worse before the Victorian Great Exhibition and the post-war Festival of Britain. In the former case only the energetic patronage of Prince Albert ensured that the glorious Crystal Palace (a speedily built and impermanent structure, just

like the D***) went up. In the case of the latter, a rain-drenched trade show which only later became a great symbol of post-war British revival, virtually all the Cabinet was against it and the press was even more aggressive than today's Dome-knockers.

Today's anti-Dome mood may reflect a contemporary lack of confidence in the ability of politicians or the state to deliver anything impressive or interesting – a satire-saturated, post-Thatcher scepticism. We are not used to looking to grandeur or vision from our leaders. But such scepticism is itself traditional. The question now is: can the Dome do something useful that our privatised infotainment culture can't?

For the answer to be yes, the experience must make us think and argue in ways we wouldn't otherwise do. Success will be measured by its organisers by visitor numbers and the extent of worldwide media coverage: does it sell tickets? Does it keep Britain on the map? But, for the rest of us, success will be harder and more interesting to calibrate. It will be measured by what we said and thought during and after our experience of it. Did we carry away a certain mental energy and strong memories, or not?

So a lot hangs on the private plans drawn up by designers. The Dome should not be consensual, bland or backward-

looking. It needs to pose hard questions about human futures, the choices and lifestyles ahead, the consequences of new technologies. Is the car culture going to carry on growing, or shrivel away? What future is there for the countryside? What drugs will we take, and how will they change us? Will we explore space further, and why? Is there a limit to human longevity? Will we carry on finding and using carbon fuels? For how long will sex and reproduction continue to be linked?

It doesn't need a state-sponsored show to ask questions, of course. But the authority and reach of the state, even in these privatised years, is such that it can cause them to be asked and debated more widely and vigorously than any private company could.

And that seems to me to be worth risking money and reputations to achieve. Political leadership cannot simply be all bread and no circuses; and if the circus is a provocative, inspiring one, so much the better. The Dome, in the end, will stand as an example of old-fashioned leadership, taking us into the 2000s in a thoughtful, well-informed and alert way. It has the potential to be the grandest and most enjoyable act of public education any of us have witnessed. Until and unless it fails to live up to that, we should all belt up and give it a chance.

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Sonny, you should have been Jewish, you'd have had more sense



**DAVID
AARONOVITCH**
EN PISTE WITH
THE SCHMUCKS

The sad death on the ski slopes of Nevada of Sonny Bono on Monday brings the score so far this week to Trees 2, American Politicians 1. Like Democrat Michael Kennedy on New Year's Eve, the former pop singer, husband of Cher and current Republican congressman went into a tree at speed. It is rare indeed that our leafed friends get to revenge themselves directly on human beings. Twice in six days, however, must be a record.

While Kennedy died playing American football on skis near Aspen, Colorado, Bono met his maker alone, not

far from a chairlift at the Heavenly Ski Resort, 55 miles south-west of Reno. Now, of course, he parts the powder in the real celestial thing. But on the mortal Web site of the earthly Heavenly Resort, I discovered yesterday, one may still find the warning legend – posted before Sonny's death – "on most mountains, if nature stops you this abruptly, you've had a rendezvous with a tree".

It is not, of course, that much of a surprise that both men were killed on the piste. Skiing consists of sliding down mountains at the greatest possible velocity, while attempting to dodge the various impediments that nature and man have so thoughtlessly strewn in the skier's path. These may be as varied as children, ibexes, yaks, snowploughs, pylons, abysses, cross-axes and – for the short-sighted – villages. And trees, which – with their soft leaves and hard trunks – still infest large patches of prime skiing slope.

I only attempted downhill skiing once, when I was just into my teens. I went with a party of French school-children and can recall only three things. The first was how mainly my profile was in blue tights. The second was the impossibility of mastering those elastic ski lift things that one had to catch hold of and then shove between one's legs. And the third, nat-

urally, was hurtling downhill, out of control, while someone yelled "chasse neige!" at me, at the top of his supercilious Gallic voice. Eventually, as I neared an ibex (or perhaps it was a village), I solved the problem by simply sitting down and using my buttocks as a brake. Inelegant and painful, but effective.

Since then I have never been tempted in the slightest to take up the sport once more. My idea of risky pleasure begins and ends with the Twilight Tower of Terror at Mandelstonland (once Walt Disney World) in Florida, in which you are given the impression of being in an elevator falling 30 floors – while actually incurring slightly less risk of injury than you would had you stayed on the ground with a hot coffee and a bag of popcorn. Considerably less, depending on how hot the coffee was.

Yet every New Year one returns to work to find a colleague or two with limbs in plaster, or swathed in bandages, because of what happened to them pendant-ski. Occasionally they never come back at all. Nice, sensible, intelligent comrades who cross the road with exaggerated care, who always maintain a proper distance between themselves and the pedestrian in front (lest someone stop suddenly), but whose instinct for avoiding danger is annulled by the prospect of compet-

ing against a group of sybaritic mountaineers for the title of "the conqueror of la piste des mörtes". Up they go – and (whoosh!) down they come.

Of course, for some of them, this simple business of careering down a glacier without any method of stopping, soon feels tame. They are, after all, still alive and it is time to try something more radical. If you consult the magazines catering for those who engage in "extreme sports", you will discover hell-skiing, mountain boarding (this is without snow), and para-skiing. New sports include tree-diving (yet more opportunities for arborescent vengeance), zorbing – in which you are loaded into a 10ft-high clear plastic ball and then rolled down a steep hill – and bladderunning, involving jumping out of helicopter on top of a mountain, and then skiing down at incredible speed.

So why are some people so attracted to this kind of thing, and others – like me – so completely averse to it? Could religion or culture be playing a part here? It is very noticeable that those of us of Jewish origin are particularly uninterested in endangering ourselves for fun. It is a contemporary Jewish joke that one of the shortest volumes to be found in any library is *The Book of Jewish Adventures*. Or, as Jackie Mason put it, "Jews do not want to be in the Rodeo.

Gentiles love it. They love to sit on a horse that's gonna throw them off. They land up on the floor. They can't walk. You gotta be a puz to do it, but they love it. That's their culture, stupid as it is. Ever see a Jew in a cowboy hat looking at a horse? I never saw that. When a Jew wants to sit down, he knows a chair is perfect. He wants to take a chance, he chooses a rocking-chair."

You don't buy it? Well, consider this. Sonny Bono's real first name was Salvatore, and he came from a Sicilian American background, ie he was a Catholic. The Kennedys too are a famous Catholic family. As are the ill-fated Guinnesses. Catholics have a steady belief in their entitlement – given some properly observed formalities – to the afterlife. There again, unlike the experience of the Jews, there is little history of mass anti-Catholic pogroms (as apart from unpleasant bits and pieces of discrimination), so Catholics might be said to have few natural predators.

Think about it. One of the most famous Jewish athletes of all time was the American Mark Spitz, who won a dozen gold medals at one Olympics for swimming. It is a very, very long time since a competitor in a swimming competition was drowned. Swimming we like. Dying we can do without. Sonny Birnbaum would still be alive.

Handwritten signature: David Aaronovitch

Halewood secures baby Jaguar with £50m DTI grant

The British motor industry received a huge boost yesterday as a £50m government grant secured production of the new baby Jaguar for the Ford Halewood plant on Merseyside while Toyota prepared to announce a multi-million pound expansion of its Deeside engine factory. But the good news was tempered by a warning of a further shake-out from the Ford chairman Alex Trotman, who said the world's car-makers suffered 40 per cent excess capacity, most of it in Europe. Michael Harrison in London and Gavin Green in Detroit report.

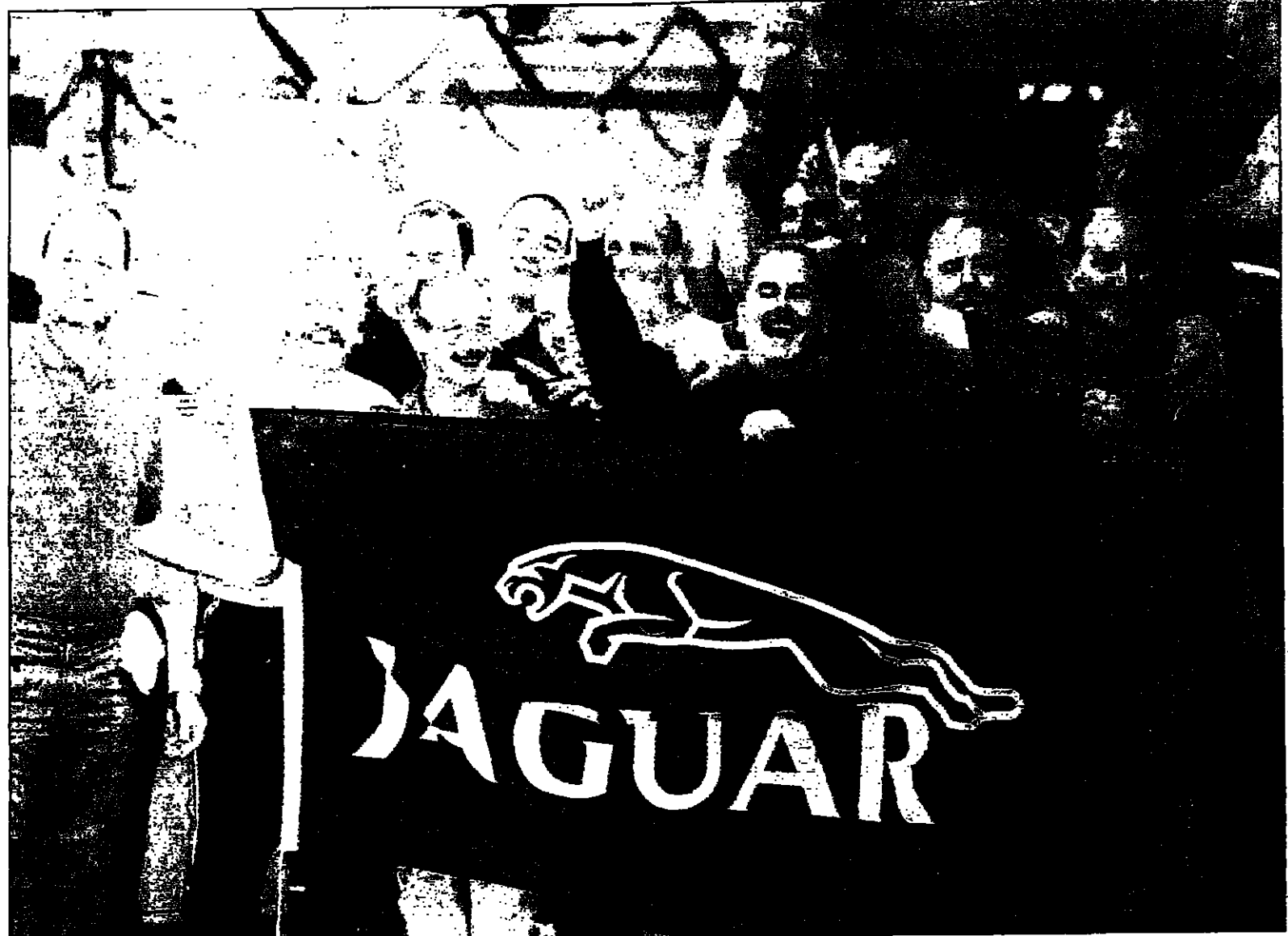
Production of the new small executive class Jaguar, codenamed the X400, will begin in 2001 and rise to 100,000 cars a year, 60 per cent of which will be sold in Europe. The £400m investment will safeguard 3,000 of the 4,500 jobs on the Halewood site. The new model will compete head-on with the BMW 3-series, the Audi A4 and the Mercedes C-class and, at current prices, will sell at just under £20,000.

Cologne – the cheapest option – without the subsidy from the Department of Trade and Industry, Mr Scheele and certain Ford top executives, including the chairman Alex Trotman and the president of its automotive operations Jac Nasser and also favoured building the new Jaguar in England for traditional and emotional reasons.

Only a year ago the Halewood plant was under threat of complete closure following the decision not to build the new Escort on Merseyside. Confirmation that the plant had won the new Jaguar investment was greeted with jubilation. Tony Woodley, national secretary of the T&G trade union and chief Ford negotiator, described the decision as great news for the British motor industry and Merseyside. "It means that one of the most famous brand names in British manufacturing will continue to be built in its home country in large measure because of the work trade unions have put in to resolving this issue."

Jaguar's decision "shows that the UK remains the most competitive location for automotive manufacture in Europe". Negotiations over the aid package are expected to be finalised within three weeks and then submitted to the European Commission for approval.

The go-ahead for the X400 follows the decision last year to build a new medium-sized Jaguar, the X200 at the company's main Coventry site to compete with the BMW 5-series. Mr Scheele said: "Jaguar will turn itself from a small car company into a major player on the international stage. By the time X400 comes on-stream we will be a four-model line company with total production of between 200-250,000 cars a year."



Waving the flag: Workers on the production line at the Ford Halewood plant on Merseyside celebrating the decision to build the new small Jaguar sports saloon car at the plant. The decision, confirmed at the Detroit motor show yesterday, will secure thousands of jobs in Merseyside. Photograph/Reuters

Car sales surge but imports take bigger share

Car sales last year were the third best on record, reaching 2.17 million, following a higher than expected surge in registrations in December. Figures released today will show.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders will announce that 1997 sales were up by 7 per cent on the 2,025 million recorded in 1996.

The same month in 1996, according to industry sources.

But despite the increase, the market remains below its peak of 2.3 million sales recorded in the boom year of 1989 and the 2.2 million in 1988. The SMMT figures will show that imports grabbed a rising share of the market, accounting for more than 65 per cent of total sales.

The Retail Motor Industry Federation (RMIF) said building society windfalls and

booming consumer confidence had boosted the market, offsetting the rises in interest rates. But Christopher Macgowan, the RMIF's chief executive, predicted sales would drop back slightly to 2.15 million this year as optimism ebbed. "1998 will not be as strong as last year, but the industry will remain remarkably resilient," he said.

Rover's market share, including Land Rover, is expected to have fallen to less

than 10 per cent for the first time since the formation of British Leyland in the 1960s. The group, owned by BMW, is likely to reveal sales of between 214,000 and 215,000 for 1997, down from 222,000 in 1996, when Rover grabbed almost 11 per cent of the market.

The company will point to its decision to reduce its dependence on heavily discounted fleet sales to companies. Sales to private

buyers improved last year, accounting for some 60 per cent of Rover's total UK registrations. Five years ago Rover's private sales were less than 50 per cent.

BMW yesterday said Rover's worldwide sales last year had risen from 507,000 to 523,000, with rising demand from Italy, Japan and the US.

The German group said its total global sales would show a rise of 4 per cent, to 1.2 million. Chris Godsmark

IMF targets in doubt as Asian currencies suffer fresh slump

Tough targets set by the International Monetary Fund for the multi-billion dollar Asian rescue package were in growing jeopardy last night following a disappointing Indonesian budget.

Stephen Vines watched from Hong Kong as Asian currencies took another tumble.

Growing anxiety over the problems in Indonesia and an apparent lack of government resolve to tackle them was

fuelled by the Indonesian budget presented last night by President Suharto. He ignored the IMF's demand for a budget surplus and shied away from some of the austerity measures which had been expected in return for the IMF's \$23bn (£14bn) bailout.

The budget, which will be balanced, will increase overall spending by 32 per cent and preserve a domestic fuel subsidy. The Indonesian rupiah lost 15 per cent of its value at one point in yesterday's trading before clawing back to a 9 per cent fall, which still represented a record low.

South Korea also said on Tuesday it was discussing

changes in macroeconomic targets with the IMF to take account of the country's deteriorating economy. But Korea, deep in talks about rescheduling its foreign debts, has indicated that it is likely to accept the previously unpalatable suggestion of having the state underwrite private corporate debt. Lim Chang-yul, the Finance Minister, said he would accept this proposal as the price for rescheduling.

Analysts said the difficulties faced by governments in meeting the demands of the IMF raised questions as to whether the Fund's bitter medicine was the right prescription for

the region's economic ills. It also highlighted how quickly basic economic assumptions could be blown seriously off course.

"These agreements, in terms of the growth, inflation and budget forecasts, were rushed through pretty quickly without real reference to the dynamism of the crises unfolding," said Graham Neilson, Asia economist at Banque Paribas. "The collapse of the baht and rupiah since these targets were first agreed makes them totally unrealistic."

South Korea went against regional trends yesterday with its currency rising in value and

the stock market gaining 2.5 per cent. This came with news that the government is talking to the IMF about lowering the economic target growth rate to zero to 2 per cent from about 3 per cent, while turning the previously agreed \$4.3bn current account deficit to a surplus this year.

In Taiwan, where the local currency plunged to an 11-year low against the dollar, the central bank governor Sheu Yuan-dong said his country could not prevent depreciation against the "super strong" US dollar. Even the Japanese yen was down to almost 134 against the dollar, the lowest rate of

exchange for five-and-a-half years.

In Malaysia talk of bank failures took the local currency down to a new low following a 6 per cent fall. In Manila a surge of business brought foreign currency trading to a halt before the Philippines government lifted volume limits.

After trading resumed the peso slid to another record low against the dollar, losing 5.6 per cent of its value.

In Thailand the baht dropped almost 4.8 per cent, taking it well below the previously unthinkable exchange rate of more than 50 baht to the dollar. It closed at just over 52.

Buyback speculation as BG disposals raise over £1bn

BG, the former British Gas, is set to raise well over £1bn from its sale of businesses by the middle of the year, far more than previously predicted. As Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, reports, the cash raised is likely to fuel speculation of another share buyback later in 1998.

The disposal programme, begun early last year, is understood to have raised considerably more than analysts had originally expected, largely due to BG's moves to sell off its smaller international ventures and overseas exploration and production divisions.

The company now expects to have raised between £1.2bn and £1.3bn from the sales by the middle of this year, compared with a figure of "several hundreds of millions" previously mentioned.

BG's top management, led by David Varney, chief executive, will give more details of the disposals when the group re-

ports its annual results at the end of February.

The news is likely to fuel confidence in BG's prospects since its defeat at the hands of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) last summer in its long-running battle over pipeline charges.

In recent months BG shares have risen sharply as industry analysts reappraised its prospects overseas, and as the company concentrated on ploughing investment into larger projects.

Several more deals are understood to be due in the next few months, with contracts in the final stages of negotiation. Last year saw a string of sale agreements, including part of the group's interests in Tunisia.

In November BG unveiled a deal to sell its German businesses to Verbundnetz Gas, a transmission company. The deal, thought to be worth up to £100m, included stakes in a regional gas distribution company and a property and energy services group.

Although BG has privately played down suggestions that it is looking to make a further share buyback, the cash raised is likely to boost the prospects of another payout to investors

at the end of this year. Last year's capital restructuring handed back £1.3bn to shareholders, around the same figure as the cash raised by the on-going sale of businesses.

However the group is waiting for the outcome of the government's review of utility regulation before committing itself to any investor payout. BG has been vigorously lobbying for changes to the system, to force regulators to implement the MMC's conclusions in full.

Alongside news about asset sales, BG will tell investors next month that it expects to invest about £1.5bn a year in overseas projects. BG's prospects were given a huge boost late last year when the group, along with other oil and gas giants, signed agreements opening up exploration opportunities in Kazakhstan, which has huge unexploited reserves.

BG has a 32.5 per cent stake in a consortium, which includes Agip and Texaco, developing one of the world's largest oil and gas fields in West Kazakhstan. Another consortium, in which BG has a 16.67 per cent share, is developing fields north of the Caspian Sea.

Burton sales figures lift high-street gloom

Burton provided some cheer for Britain's retail scene yesterday with a Christmas trading statement showing sales had been stronger than doomsayers had been forecasting. The figures were helped by a late surge in consumer spending in the final shopping days.

Burton shrugged off pre-Christmas concerns about weak trading and the impact of higher interest rates with figures showing that sales in the 18 weeks to 3 January were 7.6 per cent ahead of the previous year.

The company, which plans to de-merge its Debenhams division later this month, said sales had started more slowly than expected but improved as Christmas approached. It dismissed suggestions that some of its

shops had been panicked into starting their winter sales early saying its discounts had started on Boxing Day "as planned."

There was also relief in the City that in spite of the late surge in spending, Burton's margin was in line with last year's.

Debenhams' sales, including newly opened space, were up by 6.9 per cent. The multiples business, which includes Dorothy Perkins and Principles, showed an 8.6 per cent gain. Contrary to expectations, women's wear performed more strongly than menswear. Commenting on the figures, Nick Bubb at Societe Generale Strauss Turnbull said: "It shows that there was a late pick-up in trading but whether that is the same for everyone remains to be seen."

Clinton Cards, the specialist greeting cards retailer, provided a further boost to sentiment yesterday with a like-for-like sales increase of 11.8 per cent in the five weeks to 28 December.

Other retail shares edged higher on Burton's news. Ian MacDougall, analyst at Williams de Broe, said: "It has been greeted by the market with a degree of relief given the blood-curdling rumours before Christmas."

Burton's figures were in line with the 8 per cent increase reported by the John Lewis Partnership's department stores for the four weeks to 24 December. John Lewis also said it had experienced a late run in trading. Burton's shares closed 3p higher at 143p.

— Nigel Cape

Whitbread 'considering brewery closures'

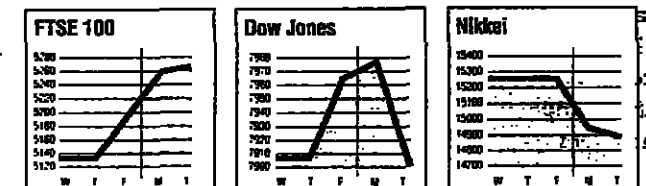
Speculation was mounting last night that Whitbread, the brewing and pub giant, is about to close two of its five breweries with the loss of several hundred jobs. The Flowers brewery in Cheltenham and its brewing operation in County Durham, which produces Castle Eden and Trophy Bitter, are likely to be axed. Drinks analysts in the City seemed unsurprised by the rumours.

One said: "Their three big breweries in Manchester, North Wales and Preston all have capacity to produce more than a million barrels each and could be made to squeeze out Whitbread's current total pro-

duction of 5.5 million barrels between them." The rumoured targets for closure are the smallest breweries in the group, analysts point out. Castle Eden has capacity of about 250,000 barrels while Cheltenham produces 500,000 barrels a year of Flowers. "Both are largely cask ale producers," one analyst said, "and that is a section of the market in decline. We can expect an upsurge from Camra [the Campaign for Real Ale lobby group] if these closures go through." Instead, Whitbread will concentrate on its big-selling brands such as Stella Artois and Boddingtons.

— Andrew Yates

STOCK MARKETS



Indices	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5264.40	1.30	0.04	5367.30	4036.90	3.21
FTSE 250	4856.90	30.20	0.63	4963.80	3384.30	3.24
FTSE 350	2626.30	3.70	0.15	2670.50	2013.40	3.24
FTSE All Share	2464.74	3.84	0.16	2507.68	1966.91	3.20
FTSE SmallCap	2335.30	6.80	0.29	2407.40	2182.10	3.15
FTSE Realind	1271.50	3.50	0.28	1346.50	1225.20	3.29
FTSE AIM	999.00	1.10	0.11	1138.00	965.90	1.07
Dow Jones	7901.52	-77.97	-0.98	8299.03	6356.78	1.73
Nikkei	14886.40	-80.44	-0.40	20810.79	14488.21	1.94
Hong Kong	10135.51	-168.03	-1.63	11880.81	8775.88	4.19
Dax	4332.83	-32.16	-0.73	4459.99	2875.06	1.68

INTEREST RATES

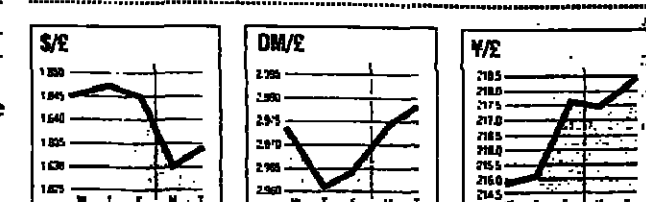


Money Market Rates	3 month	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
UK	7.62	1.09	7.63	0.56	6.09	-1.64	6.06
US	5.72	0.16	5.81	-0.06	5.53	-1.00	5.77
Japan	0.78	0.30	0.75	0.17	1.85	-0.95	2.48
Germany	5.61	0.46	3.95	0.67	5.21	-0.76	5.27

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg
Brit Biotech	113.00	9.50	8.13	Brit Petroleum	785.00	-41.00	-5.09
Royal and Sun	858.00	40.00	4.71	Shell Transport	426.00	-22.00	-4.91
Burford Hedges	107.00	6.00	5.94	Slovenpharma	51.5	-2.5	-4.83
Medeva	165.00	9.00	5.11	Christies	265	-10	-3.64

CURRENCIES



£/\$	£/DM	£/¥
1.6328	0.006	1.6963
1.6328	0.006	1.6963
1.6328	0.006	1.6963

Other Indicators	Value	Change	% Change
Brent Oil (\$)	15.32	0.11	24.75
Gold (\$)	282.05	0.20	357.95
Silver (\$)	6.02	0.14	4.86

OUTLOOK
ON PROSPECTS FOR
BOND AND EQUITY
RETURNS AND
BANK LENDING TO
THE FAR EAST

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OUTLOOK ON PROSPECTS FOR BOND AND EQUITY RETURNS AND BANK LENDING TO THE FAR EAST

Bonds heading towards uncharted waters

In the late 1950s, George Ross Goobey, then head of the Imperial Tobacco pension fund, discovered what is taken for granted these days throughout most of the world – the cult of equity. Over the long term, he rightly predicted, equities would always outperform fixed-rate government bonds because dividends could be expected to grow at least in line with the economy and in many cases a good deal faster. As investors woke up to this now obvious truism, something very strange happened – equities started to yield less than gilts, which previously had commanded a safety first premium. These days nobody would expect any different but at the time this was a seismic shift in perceptions and investment behaviour. What peculiarly became known as the reverse yield gap has ruled ever since.

This gap has typically been maintained both here and in the US at somewhere above 2 per cent. However, since the start of this decade, it has been narrowing, albeit modestly. Still, with talk of global deflation in the air and the US long bond yield touching its lowest level since the 1930s, it is worth asking how much further the gap can decline, or whether we might even get another of those seismic shifts.

A detailed answer to this question will be contained in the forthcoming annual Equity-Gilt Study from Michael Hughes at BZW. Last year's version of this always fascinating assessment of long-term trends pointed out that the inflationary background makes a huge difference to prospects for the two different types of asset.

In the intervening 12 months the advanced economies have enjoyed another excellent inflation performance. In the US inflation has now been around 2 per cent for five years. One important consideration for investors is what is causing such inflation as there is. If it reflects greater profitability as output expands, this is good for both bonds and equities. This has generally been the case so far in the economic recovery, and indeed both markets have enjoyed an excellent run. But if higher wage rises are becoming increasingly important as a cause of inflation, then even if the rate stays low, it will be bad news for equities.

As Mr Hughes puts it, for the first time in his career there is a prospect that prices will actually fall during the next leg of the business cycle. The reasons are well rehearsed – increased competition thanks to globalisation, the effect of new technology, the Asian crisis, over-cautious monetary policy. If prices do start to drop, this too would be negative for companies and for equity yields. Already we are seeing unconvincing evidence of a decoupling of bond and equity markets. The bull market in bonds continues apace. In equities it has been at an end since the middle of last year, at least in the US.

This is not to say that bonds can be expected to start giving investors a higher total return, adding capital gains and reinvested gross yields, than equities. Even during the extraordinary deflation of the 1930s, this was not true, despite the dividend cuts and insolvencies of that period. Nor does it seem at all likely that the reverse yield gap

will reverse again, though this has come close to happening in Japan since the Tokyo stock market crash of the early 1990s.

But taking account of other factors, like the increasing preference of pension funds for investing in bonds as the population ages and the funds mature, and the drying-up of supply as governments run cautious budget policies, the yield gap could fall to a level below anything in our recent experience.

Bankers may be wising up at last

The wooden spoon award for clownish behaviour last year must again go to the banking industry, and particularly to European bankers, who were recklessly increasing their exposure to South Korea and the other Pacific Rim economies even as Japan was reducing hers. How is it that with sickening regularity, our bankers every few years seem to find a whole new system of black holes to pour their shareholders' and depositors' money into? Don't they ever learn? In the 1970s, it was property, in the early 1980s it was Latin American sovereign debt, in the early 1990s it was dodgy entrepreneurs and, yes, property again. Now its lending to the Far East.

One answer to this question is that bankers have to lend the money somewhere and every now and again some of it is more or less bound to go wrong. Nobody else foresaw the crisis in the Far East,

so why should bankers? A very similar argument was used by NatWest in the early 1990s to justify extensive bad loans to Robert Maxwell. Bankers are not policemen, NatWest insisted, and there was no reason to believe Maxwell was a crook or had overstretched himself.

However, what both cases do in their different ways is highlight another aspect of bank lending – its ability to accentuate boom and bust. Bankers tend to feed the speculative bubble on the way up by pouring capital into it and then greatly enhance the subsequent crisis in the often disorderly struggle to get their money back which then ensues. Governments have traditionally been the main engines of the boom and bust cycle, but bankers tend to be the drive shaft. Nor do they ever seem to learn from the experience.

One possible explanation for this is that large banks are very rarely allowed to go bust. This is certainly the case in the developed world where there is an implicit understanding that big banks are essentially government-backed institutions; somehow or other depositors will always be bailed out if the bank gets into trouble.

In the South Korean crisis, we are beginning to see a variation of this implicit guarantee. So desperate is the South Korean government to preserve its reputation in international credit markets, such as it now is, that it is willing to contemplate the conversion of some commercial debt into sovereign debt. If bankers are never likely to suffer the full consequences of their lending decisions,

then they can hardly be blamed for failure to act with due care and attention.

There is no obvious solution to this problem. If governments ceased to bail out banks, then it is possible to imagine a crisis like that of the Far East causing very considerable systemic damage with far-reaching consequences for the international economy. Nobody wants that.

Most suggested remedies suffer from clear drawbacks. Banks could, for instance, be asked to cross guarantee each other, thus causing peer group pressure against poor lending. However, this would also restrict competition between banks and would be next to impossible to administer. Furthermore, such a scheme would not be dissimilar in its effect to the lifeboat operations central bankers try and arrange among collections of domestic banks when one gets into difficulties. There is no evidence that the enforced participation of banks in lifeboats prevents bad lending.

The best hope must be that, as bankers and capital markets become more sophisticated, transparent and wise, the problem will slowly prove self-correcting. To argue that in the Far Eastern crisis we may have seen the last of the great boom-to-bust seizures would be going too far. It is human nature to speculate. No amount of experience and regulation will stop it. All the same, policy-makers and markets the world over do genuinely seem to be getting better at reducing the severity of the peaks and troughs in the business cycle. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that bankers too might be wising up, if only a little.

Thomson adds to confusion over £1.3bn 'travel float'

The future of Thomson Travel Group was thrown into confusion yesterday over reports that it was looking to join the stock market with a £1.3bn price tag. Andrew Yates reports on a farcical day for the largest tour operator in the UK, which involved conflicting reports from the company and its advisers.

Confusion reigned yesterday as Thomson Travel attempted to dampen speculation it was heading for a £1.3bn stock market flotation, even though its adviser, SBC Warburg Dillon Read, is understood to have been working on final plans for the tour operator to come to the stock market.

Paul Brett, chairman and chief executive of Thomson Travel, expressed surprise at reports that the group was definitely on course for a flotation in the spring.

He said: "We have had Warburgs as our advisers for 30 years. We have talked to them every few months for the years and years and they ask if we are ready to float. But no decision has been taken and a flotation is pure speculation. I have no idea what we have in mind for the future."

The final decision must come from Thomson Corporation, the Canadian media and publishing giant which owns the tour operator.

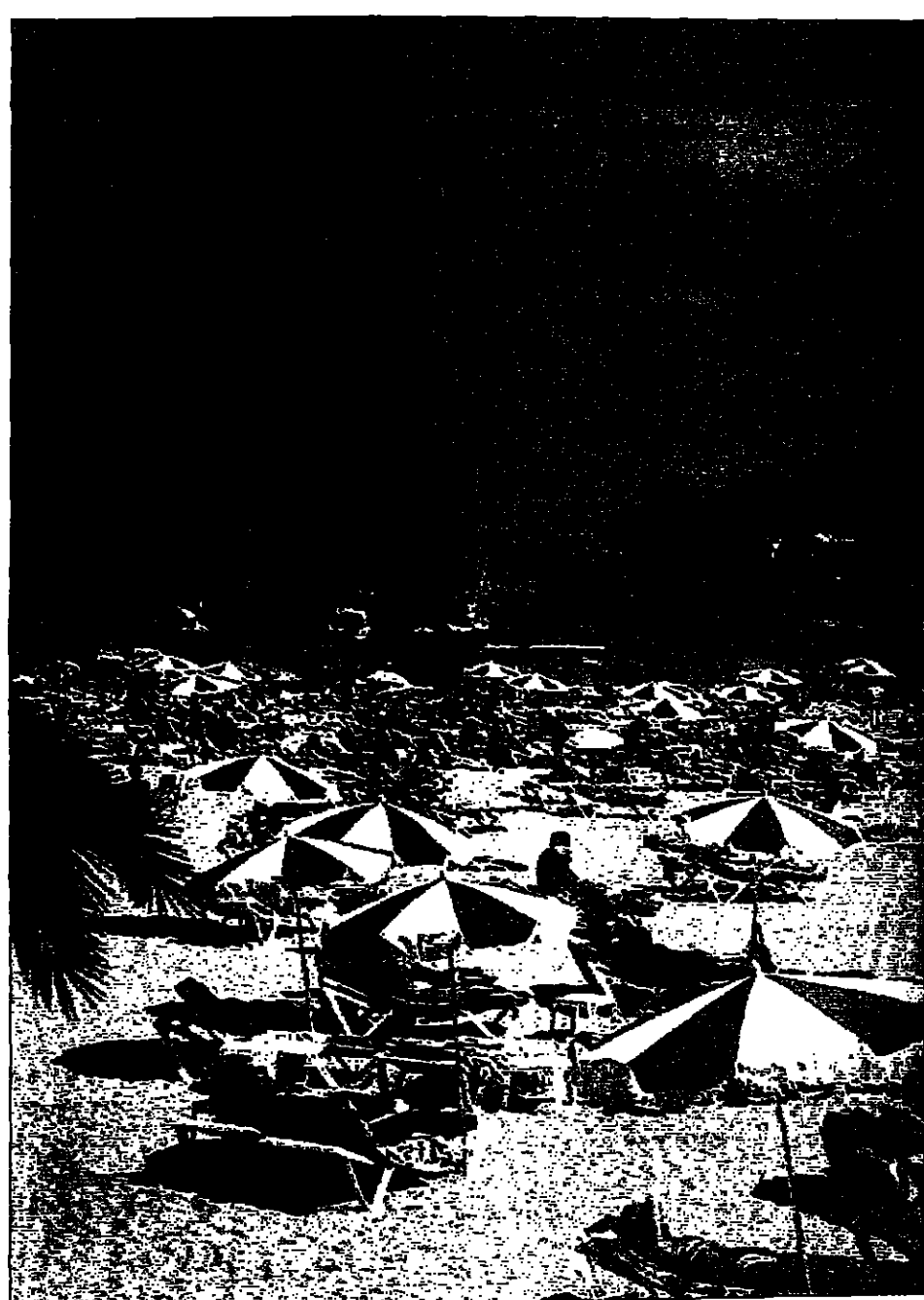
Mr Brett, a board member of Thomson Corporation, said no decision was imminent. He also denied he had instructed Warburg to compile flotation plans.

Warburg refused to comment on the record about the deal. However, in a bizarre twist, sources close to Warburg confirmed the bank was well advanced with flotation plans and that the £1.3bn deal was on track for the end of May.

"A draft mandate has been decided and they look like going ahead with the plans," said one source. City observers believe that Mr Brett is secretly very keen for the group to gain independence from its Canadian parent and is pushing for a flotation.

A flotation has become a more likely option for the group after Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, decided against forcing tour operators to give up their travel agency chains after a Monopolies and Mergers inquiry. Such a move would have hit Thomson hard as it owns the Lunn Poly chain.

It would be an good time for Thomson to come to the market. Other tour operators, such as Airtours and First Choice, have been trading strongly with



Holiday boom: With bookings at record levels, it would be a good time for Thomson to float

bookings reaching record levels due to windfall bonuses and strong economic growth.

Analysts predict that Thomson's pre-tax profits rose from £82m in 1996 to around £100m last year. "Given the buoyancy in the travel market at the

moment this would be an attractive flotation," said one.

The deal could spark off another wave of consolidation in the travel industry, giving Thomson the financial firepower to go on an acquisition spree. It is keen to expand in

Europe and Mr Brett confirmed yesterday that the group was securing the globe for deals further afield in an attempt to create an international travel business. Thomson is currently looking for targets in the Far East.

Oil prices fall on fears of oversupply

Oil shares came under renewed pressure yesterday after oil prices hit their lowest level for more than two years. The drop was prompted by fears of an oil glut after Iraq said it would start exporting immediately.

But traders are also worried that increased production from Opec and reduced demand as a result of the Asian crisis will keep oil prices low for the next few years.

Iraq suspended oil exports a month ago in protest at the slow distribution of the food and medicines it gets in return for its oil. Under a deal brokered by the UN, however,

the country will now resume exports, which allow it to sell \$2bn worth of oil every six months, boosting world production by 1 per cent.

Meanwhile, analysts are waiting to see whether Opec members, led by Saudi Arabia, will take advantage of the increased quotas they negotiated in November to boost oil production.

Combined with the lingering effects of the Asian crisis, which has undermined expected demand growth, and the build-up of stocks due to warm weather around the world, this could lead to chronic oversupply.

John Tbalster, oil analyst at

Société Générale Strauss Turb, expects demand next year to fall to 1.5 million barrels per day, while production could reach 2 million barrels per day.

As a result, he has cut his two-year average oil price forecast to \$17 per barrel. That compares with an average price of \$19.30 last year and \$20.80 in 1996. "This is not just a blip. This is a fundamental sea change," he said.

Other observers remain upbeat, however, pointing out that Saudi Arabia is unlikely to use up its full production quota if it undermines the oil price by doing so.

— Peter Thal Larsen

Eastern offers customers scheme to aid coal industry

Electricity customers will be able to make an individual contribution to the battle to save the British coal industry under a scheme unveiled yesterday by Eastern Group, the largest regional power supplier, and RJB, the company that bought most English pits at privatisation.

Eastern has promised to buy 1.5 tonnes of additional coal for every customer who signs up to the offer, called Lionheart. In its first year the group said it expected 100,000 households to take up the package, which will cost the same as its national electricity tariff, translating into 150,000 extra tonnes of RJB coal.

However, the offer only applies to customers outside Eastern's existing franchise area, which covers 3.2 million homes in East Anglia and North London. It means the scheme cannot start until the domestic electricity market opens to competition, a move which was due in April but is now likely to be delayed for several months.

An Eastern spokesman said the company had wanted to offer its existing customers the opportunity to sign up to the scheme, but were prevented by the terms of the group's operating licence. The company expected the offer to appeal most to customers in coalmining areas or former coal communities.

Eastern, which bought five coal fired power stations from National Power and PowerGen, has signed contracts to buy four million tonnes of RJB coal a year from April. The company said any further coal bought from RJB would displace imports, expected to reach 1 million tonnes a year, rather than some of its 14 other UK suppliers apart from RJB.

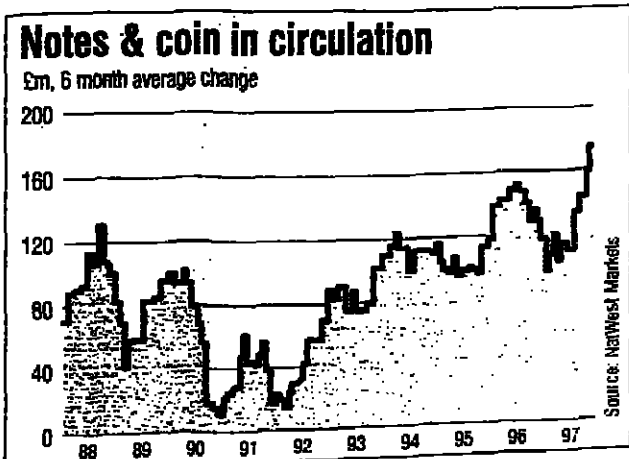
The power group late last year became the first to offer a green tariff. Households, including those in its franchise region, can opt to pay 5 or 10 per cent more for power, cash which the company will match and invest in renewable energy projects.

— Chris Godsmark

Christmas tills fail to jingle despite cash surge

How much did high street cash tills jingle before Christmas? Not nearly enough, according to some retailers, although new figures show a surge in demand for cash in December. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, investigates.

A jump in the amount of cash in circulation last month, revealed by new Bank of England figures, raised a question mark yesterday over the numerous anecdotes of a disappointing Christmas season for retailers. Although the month-to-month changes in notes and coin are a less than perfect guide to the amount of cash people are actually spending in the shops, the figures sowed further confusion about just how fast the consumer boom is fading.



Meanwhile, Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, repeated his view that the economy's growth would slow this year. But, speaking in Frankfurt, he said it was not clear yet what implications this had for the timing and pace of interest rate changes.

The Bank's Monetary Policy Committee meets today and tomorrow to discuss policy, but City analysts do not expect it to announce any change. Many see a risk of a rise in the cost of borrowing after next month's meeting, depending on figures due between now and then.

The value of notes and coin in circulation jumped by 1 per cent in December, taking the annual growth to 7.1 per cent

from 6.9 per cent. The growth of M0, the narrow money supply measure of which cash is the main component, increased a fraction to 6.9 per cent.

Plastic spending and hole-in-the-wall cash withdrawals from the Royal Bank of Scotland also hit a new peak in December. Like other high street banks, it reported big increases in December transactions compared with a year earlier, saying these tended to contradict claims by some shops of disappointing sales.

The busiest day was 19 December, when £34m was withdrawn from its machines. Its busiest single machine was at London's Liverpool Street station, which issued £12.9m during the month.

"People are holding more cash, which has to say something about a Christmas spending spree. The belt-tightening will happen in the New Year,"

said John O'Sullivan, an economist at NatWest Markets.

Economists think the windfalls of free shares have helped boost the holding of cash this past year, with money burning holes in people's bank accounts. The introduction of the new 50p coin has also increased the amount in circulation. However, higher rates, along with weakening growth, should be reflected in slower notes and coin growth in the months ahead.

Separately, Charles Goodhart, a member of the Monetary Policy Committee, said it would be feasible for the Bank of England to shadow the new European Central Bank, which comes into existence with the start of the single currency.

This could be "done without great difficulty, but it depends on the technical details," he said. The question was which price index the ECB would choose as a target.

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7 January 1998

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

The sectors to watch this year

This column, like most, tends to adhere to the bottom-up approach to investing: pick a share that looks cheap on a few fundamental valuation criteria, and don't worry too much about what industry it's in. The alternative is to take a top-down approach: pick out a few attractive industries, and then limit your buying to those sectors of the market.

That approach can be very rewarding, as a glance at the table shows. The bull run in large companies meant that you could hardly have gone wrong with banking, pharmaceutical or utility shares last year. Similarly, the strong pound and weak commodity prices meant most investments in the paper and packaging, diversified industrials or mining sectors would have left you a lot poorer. With that experience in mind, we decided to pick our three favourite sectors for the coming year.

Despite a storming performance last year there is still plenty to go for in the banking sector. Analysts are still predicting strong earnings growth. The retail banks still have plenty of scope to grow margins by cutting costs as they continue to slim down their branch networks. The promise of further consolidation in the sector is also likely to buoy share prices.

Support services also enjoyed a great 1997 and with most stocks sitting on a p/e ratio of more than 30 the sector is not cheap. However, there should be more growth to come. The outsourcing market is still expanding rapidly with more companies farming out anything from distribution to administration to third parties.

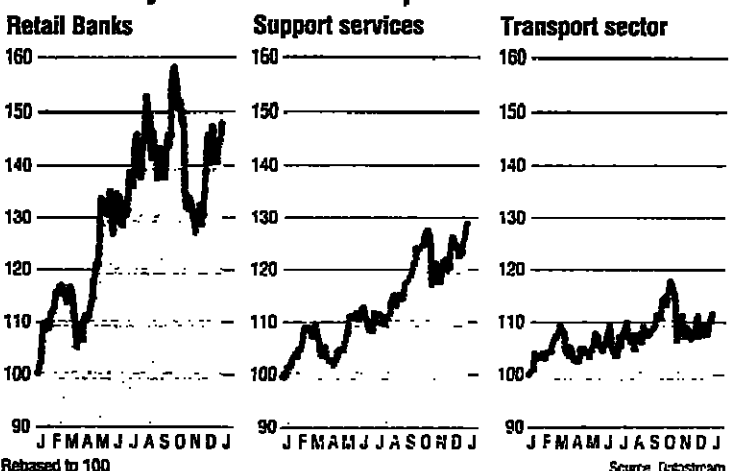
Our third choice is the transport sector, which underperformed the market last year but should bounce back in 1998. Bus and train operators were hit by fears that the Labour Government would seek to clamp down on profits by imposing tough new regulation. However, the industry has enjoyed a strong rise in passenger numbers and should actually benefit from the Government's focus on public transport.

British Airways and BAA will continue to cash in on the strong growth in airline custom and the other big player in the sector, P&O, is finally turning the corner after securing a flurry of mergers.

Last year's best and worst sectors

Best performers	Value at 01/01/97	Value at 01/01/98	Actual % change
Gas Distribution	1509.47	2440.84	61.70
Life Assurance	4060.27	5931.68	46.09
Retail Banks	5009.43	7158.26	42.90
Pharmaceuticals	5747.24	8159.85	41.98
Worst performers			
Distributors	2579.67	2519.42	-15.45
Paper & Packaging	2578.90	2141.25	-16.97
Diversified Industrials	1519.19	1251.15	-17.64
Extractive Industries	4004.85	3024.42	-24.48
FTSE 100	4118.50	5135.50	24.69

How this year's favourites performed in 1997



Low bond yields affect us all

Bonds yields rarely take centre stage in the reporting of financial markets. This week they have emerged from obscurity by hitting their lowest level for more than a decade. So what do these rock bottom yields mean for the average investor?

A close look reveals some unsettling consequences, and not just for active investors. Anyone with a pension, and most of those with an endowment savings plan, will be affected.

At first glance the figures seem innocuous enough. The 15-year variety of UK government gilts yesterday yielded 6.26 per cent - against 7.77 per cent a year ago, a fall of a mere 1.51 percentage points.

However, for anyone buying an annuity now, it makes a difference of thousands of pounds in annual income.

Because annuities give a guaranteed income until death, they must be backed by fixed-interest products such as gilts. When gilt yields go down, the price of gilts is almost certainly going up, costing annuity providers substantially more to give the same level of income.

That cost is, of course, passed on. A 55-year-old man who paid an annuity provider £250,000 yesterday would get an income of £19,707 a year. The same sum a year ago would have bought £22,793, according to figures from the Annuity Bureau, a specialist annuity adviser. In other words annuities are providing 14 per cent a year less in income because of the fall in bond yields. The rule of thumb is that for every fall of 1 percentage point in gilt yields, a pension saver needs 10 per cent more capital for the same retirement income.

Owners of endowment policies may also be concerned at low bond yields. The growth of endowment savings depends crucially on the bonus paid out by the life office which sells the endowment.

Actuaries, the life office gurus who decide how much the bonus should be, split it between an annual bonus, which is guaranteed to be paid, and a terminal bonus, which is not guaranteed and is only paid at maturity. The less actuaries expect from investments, such as bonds, the less they guarantee to pay.

Even the best-paying life offices are now promising just 8 per cent every year - and this will probably get lower. For investors who bought endowment mortgages in the hope of returns of 12 per cent a year, payments may well need an urgent review. That will avert a nasty surprise when the mortgage falls due.

The drop in bond yields is attributed by most observers not to current events but to long-term economic factors. The Government's decision to stand firm on meeting the Maastricht criteria for monetary union has led brokers to expect low long-term interest rates, which makes even a bond yield of 6.25 per cent attractive.

So ironically, Labour's European policy is doing much more to push up the cost of pensions than the Budget cuts in dividend tax relief.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



I hear that Elisabeth Murdoch's husband, Ghanaian-born Eldin Pinnam, has decamped back to the United States, apparently fed up with Britain and the Brits following an unhappy adventure into British ethnic publishing with the *New Nation* newspaper. His stake in the venture, aimed largely at London's black community, has been sold. Also abandoned in Mr Pinnam's return to the US West Coast is his plan to launch a new black TV station in the UK.

So where does that leave the 290-year-old Ms Murdoch, who remains in London working for her pa's media empire as head of programming at BSkyB. Minus a husband seems to be the answer. She's even had to rely on the services of such maverick entrepreneurs as the carrot-topped DJ Chris Evans as an escort at the many functions her job requires her to attend. What a comedown.

All of which may help explain the £3m sponsorship deal BSkyB has just signed with Mr Evans' Virgin Radio. It might also cause Murdoch senior to rethink his plans for the succession. At present his youngest son Lachlan has been pencilled in to take up the reins. Elisabeth, he said recently, would have to make up her mind about how many kids she wanted and where she wanted to live. Not any longer, it would appear.

They're fighting in the forecourts. In the right corner, James Frost, the combative chairman of petrol retailer Save Group. And over by the air pump, Dean Overton, the former managing director who was sacked by Mr Frost for "gross misconduct" in November.

Mr Overton is suing his former employers for "a very substantial sum in damages" and has written to Save's shareholders to tell them so. Now Mr Frost has thrown petrol on the fire by revealing why Mr Overton was sacked. He claims Mr Overton dismissed two long-serving Save employees who subsequently had to be paid compensation. Mr Overton also wrote

"threatening" letters to licensees who were suspected of opening their stations late, he claimed.

Mr Overton protests that he was just following orders. "I'm a very loyal person," he tells me. "If I'm instructed to do something then that is what I do." Mr Frost, meanwhile, refuses to pay a penny. "I wouldn't buy off a forecourt attendant, and I won't buy off a managing director either," he thunders. Get ready for round three.

Good to hear that the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) has called in Docman to sort out its IT problems. Each court case the SFO brings involves hundreds of thousands, often millions, of pieces of paper as evidence. Docman, an IBM computer system costing £15m, should sort it out.

I was a little disconcerted, however, by the accompanying claim from the SFO's director, Rosalind Wright, yesterday, that "The SFO is a world-leader in the investigation and prosecution of major fraud cases." Cripes. The rest can't be up to much. Don't mention the Maxwells, Blue Arrow, Roger Levitt...

You would think that, having trousered £50m from selling his shares in Betterware, chairman Andrew Cohen would be keen to plough more money into his stable of racehorses. After all, one of the Brummie entrepreneur's nags, Sunny Bay, is third favourite to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup in March.

Not a bit of it. Mr Cohen tells me he is thinking of reducing his spending on racing, centred on his stables at Lambourn, in Berkshire. He says he agrees with the Makhloom family's recent criticisms of British horse racing and the lack of adequate prize money. Which makes you wonder - just when will he have enough money? And what will he do with his present pile? He already has the best collection of Charlie Chaplin memorabilia in the world.

The European Monetary Institute, the forerunner of the planned European Central Bank, and one of key players in shaping monetary union, yesterday confessed shamefacedly that it doesn't have its own Internet site. The only site that the EMI does feature on is run by the European Commission, and site hasn't been updated for two years. *Quel horreur!*

Chastened Euromandarins at the EMI promised yesterday that they will launch their own site this month. Meanwhile if you're one of those interesting people who really need to know the latest about monetary union, stick to the British Government site at <http://presid.fco.gov.uk>

It seems you can hardly move in modern offices without being molested by experts in Feng Shui, the Chinese art of creating a harmonious environment. I was delighted therefore to read in a booklet published by President Office Furniture, titled "Everything you wanted to know about offices but were afraid to ask it", that Feng Shui, literally translated means "wind and water". I suspected as much.

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- 24 speed MAX LG CD-ROM drive
- Creative Labs 3D waveable sound
- 15" SVGA 0.28dp screen (17" optional)
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- VideoPhone calls
- Voice recognition with IBM Simply Speaking Gold
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- 8Mb AGP ATI Rage Pro 3D graphics
- 24 speed MAX LG CD-ROM drive
- Creative Labs 3D waveable sound
- 15" SVGA 0.28dp screen (17" optional)
- 512K pipeline burst cache
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- VideoPhone calls
- Voice recognition with IBM Simply Speaking Gold
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- All standard features below

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Standard Features: Windows 95, Lotus SmartSuite 97, Quicken, Powerpoint, DesignWorks, Homeview, Lotus Mail, IBM Antivirus and SmartPics preloaded. Sound Force 525 means powered speaker system, 3.5" 1.44Mb floppy drive, PS/2 mouse, 105 keyboard, software MPEG Year 2000 compliant BIOS, PS/2 mouse port, fast serial port, parallel port and games port. One year warranty extendable to three or five years.

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0% APR

Airbus lifts production to meet record order book

Airbus, the European plane-maker, is to raise production levels by 30 per cent this year after receiving a record 460 firm orders in 1997 valued at \$29.6bn (£18.2m). The increase in sales enabled the four-nation consortium, in which British Aerospace has a 20 per cent stake, to close the gap on its US rival Boeing. Provisional figures suggest that Airbus captured about 44 per cent of the world market in 1996 against 56 per cent for Boeing, which now also owns McDonnell Douglas.

Quadrant to float

Quadrant Healthcare is to float to market next month in a move that will raise £30m of new money. It will be used to develop new applications for trehalose, a special sugar that allows desert plants to bloom again after years of drought. Quadrant's techniques use the sugar to control the release of drugs into the bloodstream. Quadrant is expected to make a loss of £3m in the current year, but chief executive Iain Ross is now focusing specifically on pharmaceuticals.

P&O orders cruise ships

P&O, the shipping group, has ordered two new ships at a cost of around \$850m (£522m) to be built in Italy. The two ships will be sisters to *Grand Princess*, will weigh 109,000 tons and carry 2,600 passengers. It said the ships would be delivered in the spring and autumn of 2001. Together with the other three Princess ships currently under construction, these new orders will double the size of the Princess Cruises fleet.

Acquisitions record

British companies spent a record £8.7bn last year on 226 European acquisitions, according to *Acquisitions Monthly*. Commercial Union's £201m bid for Union Financière de France-Banque and BT's £280m purchase of a stake in Telefonica de España were two of the largest deals. At the same time, European companies paid £7.1bn for UK companies - against just £4.8bn in 1996.

Pru meets deadline

Prudential has already met its March deadline for arranging compensation for mis-sold pensions - but only for the less urgent cases. The company is also offering "advance compensation" to the 2,700 cases of suspected mis-selling which it has so far failed to resolve.

Fruit and veg buyout

Senior management at dried fruit and vegetable processors JLI are buying the company for £25.3m with the help of Phil-drew Ventures, part of Union Bank of Switzerland. The company will be renamed Harrington Food Group.

Norwich cuts bonuses

Norwich Union has reduced its annual bonus by up to 0.75 percentage points, saying it expects investments to grow by less when the UK joins a single currency. With-profits endowment savers will get an annual bonus of 6 per cent, compared with 6.5 per cent last year, while pension savers will see their bonus cut to 6.75 per cent from 7.5 per cent. However, policies maturing this year will pay out record amounts, up to 13 per cent higher than in 1997. Friends Provident has also cut bonuses while Scottish Provident has reduced bonuses on pensions.

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ACCOUNT TYPE	MONTHLY RATE	APR (VARIABLE)
OPTION ACCOUNTS		
- PAID BY DIRECT DEBIT	2.15%	29.0
- PAID BY OTHER MEANS	2.28%	31.0
BUDGET ACCOUNTS	2.32%	31.6
POWER OPTION ACCOUNTS	2.21%	29.9

FOR DEBENHAMS BUDGET ACCOUNTS THESE NEW RATES WILL APPLY TO ALL BALANCES BROUGHT FORWARD FROM 15 JANUARY 1998 AND TO ALL TRANSACTIONS DEBITED FROM THAT DATE. FOR ALL OTHER ACCOUNTS, THESE RATES WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE ON 19 JANUARY 1998 AND WILL APPLY TO ALL INTEREST BEARING BALANCES OUTSTANDING ON AND TO ALL TRANSACTIONS DEBITED FROM THAT DATE.

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GBMH1 1/98

Slump in the price of crude sends oil shares sliding

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

Oil shares ran dry as the crude price slumped and investment houses pulled back their forecasts.

British Petroleum fell 41p to 765p and Shell 22p to 426p, helping to push the oil sector down by approaching 5 per cent. In the autumn BP was riding at 956.5p and Shell at 484.5p.

With Iraq at last resuming exporting, mild weather in the US and the Asian turmoil the crude price is under intense pressure and has fallen sharply.

Goldman Sachs and Société Générale Strauss Turnbull piled on the agony. The American securities house cut its crude estimate for this year by \$1 to \$17 a barrel. Only a few months ago the analyst Peter Nicol lowered his forecast by \$3 to \$18.

John Tolster at SocGen re-

duced his crude estimates for this year and next from \$17 to \$17.80 and \$18.70 respectively. He moved his stance on the sector from buy to neutral.

Lasmo was lowered 9p to 265p and Enterprise Oil 12p to 574p.

The oil retreat undermined the rest of the stock market although Footsie, encouraged by futures influences, managed to end 1.9 points higher at 5,264.4. At one time it was off 41.7.

The supporting shares outperformed their peers with the FTSE 250 index up 30.2 to 4,858.9; even the FTSE Small-Cap managed a 6.8 gain to 2,335.3p.

Insurers were again the main Footsie spur. Hopes of more buy backs as well as improved margins lifted Royal & Sun Alliance 40p to 658p and Sun Life & Provident 22p to

495p. Other financials made headway. Woolwich started with a 13p gain to 338p, a peak, and Bank of Scotland rose 18p to 592.5p.

Norwich Union, the insurer, was another recent recruit to reach a high. Its bonus statement was well received but the conversion is growing that the former mutual will not see out the year as an independent group. The shares rose 8.25p to 406p, capitalising the group at around £8bn.

Cadbury Schweppes enjoyed support from Dresdner Kleinwort Benson and SBC Warburg, gaining 15p to 630p. Warburg produced a 78p target. The investment house also gave Booker, the food group, a friendly nudge, pushing the shares 13p higher to 333.5p.

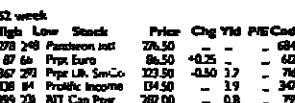
Engineer GKN moved ahead 58p to 1,335p following

its Canadian helicopter deal and bullish comments from Lehman Brothers and Warburg which is looking for the price to reach 1,500p.

Granada put on 35p to 990p, seemingly drawing belated benefit from a number of analysts' comments. Ladbroke, up 14p to 288p, was another in catch-up mode - in this case the Coral takeover.

Burton's trading statement left the shares 3p higher at 143p but failed to allay fears of poor festive trading by some retailers. Clinton Cards, the greeting cards chain, produced an upbeat statement; the shares rose 6.5p to 105p. Its performance encouraged WH Smith, up 8p to 400p. Henderson Crosthwaite caution lowered Dboons, reporting next week, 6.5p to 596p. The house was, however, positive on Kingsfisher, 13.5p firmer at 876.5p. Analyst briefings helped Hillsdown Holdings 6.5p harder at 155.5p.

Olives Property added 6.25p to 38p following a bid offer and a 65p offer for the JLI food group prompted a 7.5p gain to 63.5p. Activity at the printing group Fairway indicated the signalled bid action could be near. The shares rose 3p to 65.5p.

Share Spotlight
share price, pence

Cambridge Mineral Resources ended 1.75p lower at 17.25p after confirming the takeover of South Atlantic Resources, exploring for minerals in the Falkland Islands.

Emerald Energy held at 6p. Montmout Oil & Gas is splashing out \$7.3m for a 14 per cent stake in one of its Colombian wells. The long drilling programme continues at its Chawina 2 well; the results should be known within two weeks.

Albion, the menswear manufacturer, cut a 20p dash to 70p after a sharp profits advance and dividend increase.

Blick, the electronics group, hardened 17.5p to 297.5p ahead. There is vague talk of corporate action.

The yearly shareholders' meeting is due next month. Last year profits fell from £15.3m to £12.9m.

TAKING STOCK

Action is expected to emerge soon at John Mansfield, the little timber group being prepared for a much grander role. In the summer Julian Treger and Brian Myerson, scourge of under performing companies, decided to do their own thing and descended on Mansfield, acquiring 65 per cent. So far their involvement has led to the arrival of a new chairman, Stuart Wallis, once chief executive of Fisons. The shares are 8.25p.

Engineer Widney edged ahead 1p to 48.5p as two investors, with 11.5 per cent, called a shareholders' meeting to oust three directors, including David Cassidy, chairman and chief executive. Last month Widney said talks with a bidder had ended. The "rebels" are Strand Associates, a financial boutique, and SEP Industrial, unchanged at 28.5p.

52 week	High	Low	Price	Chg	YTD	PE	Code
Alcoholic Beverages							
52 40 Allied Domeq	54.00	48.00	51.00	+0.50	10	100	
52 40 B&B	54.00	48.00	51.00	+0.50	10	100	
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268 204	Hayward W	206.50	-4.00	8.4	9.5	2291	
268 94	Hayward W	51.50	-	4.9	27.1	2166	
76 40	Imcock	353.00	-2.50	4.2	11.5	2354	
530 273	Johnson Gp	205.00	-5.00	-	394.2	524	
227 832	Kingspan	97.50	+1.50	5.3	6.7	2088	
137 93	Marley	125.00	-1.50	5.2	16.0	2383	
93 120	Marshall	386.00	+0.50	3.9	8.1	2140	
437 246	Mayes Ind	69.50	-	3.4	16.3	2165	
52 44	Mayne						

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صبرنا من الامل

THE TIMES FA YOUTH CUP Third round: Hull vs Bristol Rovers (70); North County v Arsenal (70).

Basketball

LADWISER LEAGUE: Birmingham Bullets v Chester Jets (70).

Ice hockey

SPRINGS CUP: Air Scotland Eagles v Cardiff (70); Newcastle Cobras v Sheffield Steelers (70); Manchester Storm v Basingstoke (70).

Other sports

ARTS: Embassy World Professional Championship; Lakeside Country Club; Primley Green, Arsenal.

BOOKS: World Championship qualifiers.

FOOTBALL

City offered £7m for Kinkladze by Everton

Despite tabling a firm bid for Georgi Kinkladze, Everton may have jumped the gun with their offer for the Georgian midfielder, as Andy Hinchcliffe's proposed move to Tottenham Hotspur to finance the deal is now in doubt. Alan Nixon reports.

Everton made a £7m offer for Manchester City's Georgi Kinkladze last night. Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, contacted City to make an official bid for the Georgian midfielder and the Maine Road club have arranged an emergency board meeting on Friday to give them an answer.

Francis Lee, the City chairman, was told of the bid while on holiday in Barbados, although the final decision has to be taken by the full board.

Everton were confident their offer would be too good for City to refuse, and Kinkladze himself is now also believed to be keen on a move to Goodison despite a lack of interest in an earlier bid. However, Everton's bid depended on the sale of Andy Hinchcliffe to Tottenham Hotspur, a move which looked in danger of collapse last night.

The defender arrived at White Hart Lane for talks yesterday, but returned to Merseyside without signing after he was told the offer from Spurs did not include a signing-on fee and only a basic salary.

Spurs claim they do not need to pay Hinchcliffe a sweetener to join them as he has already had a £500,000 pay-off from Everton, but Hinchcliffe says that he got his "loyalty bonus" from Everton because he did not ask for a move and was entitled to a separate signing-on payment from Spurs.

The sale of Speed - should it go ahead - will bring Everton around £6m, with Sheffield Wednesday, Newcastle and possibly Tottenham still in the bidding. He will be allowed to speak to Wednesday if they confirm a new offer today.

Tottenham are continuing their spending spree with or without Hinchcliffe, and plan to fly in midfielder Moussa Saib to complete a £3m move tomorrow. Christian Gross, the Spurs coach, and the club's new director of football, David Pleat, have secured a deal with Spanish side Valencia for Saib, who will add some much needed strength and quality to the Spurs midfield.

Saib only moved to Spain this season from Auxerre, where he made his name, but he has been told he can leave. The French-Algerian does not need a work permit and could go straight into the Tottenham team for the Manchester United game on Saturday if he agrees terms in time.

While playing in France, Saib had been looked at by the United manager, Alex Ferguson, and Gross first spotted the player when his old club Grasshoppers came up against him in the Champions' League.

The referee's report from last Friday's Old Firm game has made no mention of Paul Gascoigne's controversial fluke-playing gesture. Hugh Dallas' report arrived at the Scottish Football Association yesterday morning and only contained details of players cautioned during the game.

However, the England and Rangers midfielder is unlikely to escape punishment for the incident while he warmed up as substitute against Celtic.

Drew Herbertson, the SFA disciplinary chief, yesterday insisted the matter was far from closed and said Gascoigne may yet face action from the governing body in addition to a probable fine from his club.

"The referee's report does not include the incident which means on one side of the matter it is finished. But it could still be discussed at either the disciplinary committee or the general purposes committee."

Walter Smith, the Rangers manager, has promised to deal with the matter internally, with Gascoigne understood to be in line for a loss of two weeks' wages, the maximum allowed under SFA rules.



England A's Darren Maddy powers his way to a century in the three-day tour match against Kenya in Ruaraka yesterday

Report, page 26; Photograph: Graham Chadwick/Allsport

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD
No. 3581, Wednesday 7 January 1998 By Aquila Tuesday's Solution

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